

CHAPTER 22

EDUCATION AND LITERARY CULTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the period covered by this volume, state support and protection for Christianity transformed what had previously been a minor element in Roman culture into a highly disturbing factor. Already in the third century, and under the influence of Origen in particular, Christian learning had developed alongside the institutional organization of the church itself. But the pious court of Theodosius II in fifth-century Constantinople was different in atmosphere from the courts of Constantine or Constantius II, enthusiasts though both these emperors had been. The change did not come about straightforwardly or without tension. Even without the intervention of a highly vocal and state-supported religion, the fourth century saw a consolidation of late Roman society sufficient to elicit a range of cultural responses. By the end of the period, moreover, the empire was split between east and west, and in many areas of the west the issue of the acculturation of Romans and barbarians had already become a burning question. The fourth and early fifth centuries are thus characterized by rapid and varied cultural change, a change that is clearly illustrated in the variety and the vigour of literary, artistic and other forms of creativity.

The nearest thing to a shared cultural system in the fourth century (though one available only to the wealthier classes) was that provided by the traditional educational system, with its overwhelming emphasis on rhetorical skill. Educated Christians in this period received the same training as pagans; their responses to classical culture ranged, not surprisingly, from appropriation to outright hostility. By a semantic development which

* This contribution has benefited from the criticism of several colleagues, among whom I particularly wish to thank J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz. For a recent detailed survey and guide to the Latin literature of this period see Herzog (1989) (for discussion see Barnes (1991) and Vessey (1991)), and more briefly Browning (1982); for the Greek literature see Christ-Schmid-Stählin, 6th edn 1924. Generally, also Dihle (1989) 442-618. The Christian works of the period are well covered by reference works: Altaner and Stuiber (1980); Quasten (1950). There is a convenient introduction to the Greek texts in Young (1983); for the Latin see Rusch (1977). The literary history of this period is also covered in part in the standard reference works to Byzantine literature, in particular Hunger (1978); Beck (1959); Winkelmann and Brandes (1990).

took place early in our period the Greek terms 'Hellenic' and 'Hellenism' came to be used by Christians to mean simply 'pagan' and 'paganism', a development about which one scholar has written: 'since paganism and Greek culture are patently not the same thing, the consequences of their being designated by the same word were obviously momentous. This was particularly true for those Christians who were busy writing and praying in Greek.'¹ This notion of a culture of the 'other', as in the concept of worldly culture and the constructed images of 'pagans', heretics and Jews, provided a device which many Christian writers of this period used to great advantage.² The fourth and early fifth centuries are rightly considered as the 'golden' age of Christian literature, characterized by the writings of major Fathers of the church – in Greek, Athanasius, the Cappadocians (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus) and John Chrysostom, in Latin, Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine. Traditionally, such writers have been studied under the heading of 'patristics', separately from secular culture or general history. Such a division is questionable.³ Historians of the period can no longer ignore 'patristic' sources, least of all cultural historians. In turn, theologians have become more interested in literary issues, the act and manner of writing.

This period also saw changes in the balance and interaction of 'Greek' and 'Roman' elements. Cultured upper-class Romans had long since been open to Greek intellectual currents, especially in philosophy; but by the turn of the fourth century the situation had changed. While some were still deeply influenced by Greek philosophy, most now relied in the main on translations. Many of the Christian works written in Greek during the fourth century were soon translated into Latin for western use. In turn, the Greek culture of the eastern half of the empire had been influenced and subtly transformed by several centuries of Roman rule. Yet here again the situation now changed. Constantine's interest in Jerusalem, together with the rapid growth of pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the fourth century and the development of Constantinople as the Christian capital of the eastern empire, brought a growing focus on the east. In cultural as well as economic and political terms, the eastern empire flourished, while at the same time its Greek-speaking citizens were made increasingly aware of other eastern languages and literatures – Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian. The interrelation, which involved translation into and from these languages, was to increase on a striking scale until the Arab conquest and after.⁴

The equation of the terms 'Hellene' and 'Hellenic' with 'pagan' in fourth-century and later Greek texts misleadingly assumes an entity which can be labelled 'paganism' as surely as it begs the question of the reference

¹ Bowersock, *Hellenism* 10. ² See Cameron, Averil, *Rhetoric of Empire* 7.

³ See Vessey (1991); Roberts (1989) 122–4. ⁴ Fowden (1993); Peeters (1950).

of 'Hellenic'. In contrast to contemporary Christians, modern scholars tend to emphasize the elusive and plural nature of ancient paganism and the variety of its manifestations, a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* Christianity that was ruefully recognized by the emperor Julian and a few others.⁵ On occasion there was out-and-out aggression by Christians, especially in the years following the anti-pagan legislation of Theodosius I at the end of the fourth century, and often a degree of less overt unease; however, there was also a large area of cultural consensus. The eventual dominance of Christianity was by no means certain in the fourth century, however much fifth-century Christian writers may have tried to imply the opposite, and 'Christianization' proceeded as much by ambiguity and cultural appropriation as by direct confrontation.⁶ This chapter will concentrate on literary culture and on the cognitive aspects of cultural systems. But it is also necessary to consider the circumstances in which literature was produced, the kind of education available, the various types of writing that emerged during the period, and the other means by which ideas were transmitted. The nature of the audience is also an important factor. Moreover, the same period saw the emergence of an overtly Christian visual environment, displaying similar ambiguities and ambivalences, and, like Christian literature, at once drawing on and transforming the existing repertoire of images.⁷

II. CHRISTIANITY AND TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

The traditional rhetorical education continued to be valued throughout this period; it was indeed the only kind of education generally available, except in special fields like philosophy and law. Surprisingly, perhaps, and despite the Christian intellectual traditions of a few centres such as Alexandria, Caesarea and, in the east, Edessa and Nisibis, for the vast majority, Christian training remained largely informal. The beginnings of a concept of monastic education can be seen in the writings of Basil of Caesarea. But Basil himself, like his brother Gregory of Nyssa and their friend and contemporary Gregory of Nazianzus, had received the standard rhetorical education of the well-to-do, and only put his concern for Christian education into practice during his later life as a bishop. Since in the traditional curriculum the authors studied and the content of their works were exclusively classical, the great majority of Christian writers had themselves been educated in this way; thus they had to come to terms somehow with

⁵ Thus the preference for the term 'polytheism', for which see Fowden, ch. 18 above; on late paganism see also Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*.

⁶ This is the argument of Cameron, Averil, *Rhetoric of Empire*, the aggressiveness of some Christians is not however to be denied: see Brown, *Power and Persuasion*.

⁷ See Elsner, ch. 24 below; Mathews (1993) discusses a wide and less commonly cited range of visual evidence, while challenging many existing assumptions about the nature of Christian art in the fourth and fifth centuries.

classical rhetoric, just as they did with other 'worldly' matters such as wealth and family. Jerome famously dreamt that he would be accused of being a Ciceronian instead of a Christian,⁸ Basil, about whose education at Athens we learn in detail from the brilliant funeral oration composed by Gregory of Nazianzus,⁹ advocated a judicious reading of classical works by young Christians, in an atticizing treatise that was itself modelled on Plato, Demosthenes and Xenophon.¹⁰ Augustine had been a teacher of rhetoric, and Sallust, Livy, Cicero and Virgil continue to play a major role in his great work, the *City of God* (*De Civitate Dei*), written between 413 and 426. Gregory of Nazianzus put the matter clearly: 'we must not then dishonour education, because some men are pleased to do so, but rather suppose such men to be boorish and uneducated'.¹¹ None the less, there was room for much ambivalence: Gregory of Nyssa, Basil's brother, claims that their sister Macrina, who had been educated at home in the scriptures, converted Basil, the wonder-pupil, to asceticism, the 'true philosophy',¹² in contrast to the worldly teaching of Athens. 'Scorning the fame which came to him from eloquence, he "deserted"', says Gregory, 'to this hard life of manual labour, preparing for himself a life with no impediments to virtue.' But while Basil also wrote of giving up rhetoric for religion, he continued to advocate the reading of suitable classical authors, and his encomiast, Gregory of Nazianzus, specially commended him for his Christian eloquence. Gregory Nazianzen himself was one of the most accomplished Greek orators and rhetoricians of any period; his speech on Basil follows the standard rules for a classical encomium laid down by Menander Rhetor, and here as elsewhere, for instance in his *Apologeticus*, in which he explains his feelings of unworthiness at the thought of ordination, he adapted scriptural allusions perfectly to classical models. He passionately defended the right of Christians to have access through teaching to the classical heritage in the face of Julian's law seeking to forbid them, yet he sometimes felt overburdened by his own reputation and claimed to want only a life 'dead to the world and hidden in Christ'.¹³ The contribution of Basil's brother, Gregory of Nyssa, was more philosophical than rhetorical, but his own debt to Plato was just as great, as is revealed in the Platonic framework of his *Life* of his sister Macrina, and in his conception of *paideia*.¹⁴ With due and conventional modesty, Gregory of Nyssa himself claimed that he had received his education from his brother Basil,¹⁵ but he became a rhetor when he gave up his bishopric,¹⁶ and he could hardly have composed *encomia*, homilies and lives had he not had a thorough grounding in rhetoric. Finally, John Chrysostom, one of the greatest Christian preachers of any period, had been a pupil of the pagan rhetor Libanius, and a contemporary

⁸ *Ep.* 22.30. ⁹ *Or.* XLIII. ¹⁰ Wilson (1975). ¹¹ *PG* xxxvi.509A, tr. Laistner.

¹² *V. Macr.* 6. ¹³ *Or.* IV.100f.; XIX.1f. ¹⁴ Jaeger (1962) ch. 7. ¹⁵ *Ep.* XIII, to Libanius.

¹⁶ *Greg. Naz. Ep.* 11.

of Theodore of Mopsuestia.¹⁷ The leading teacher of his day, Libanius had both Christians and pagans among his pupils, though he had no high opinion of the former himself; all of them, however, necessarily came from among the better-off.¹⁸

Whatever they may have claimed on occasion, the three great Cappadocian bishops felt no real hesitation in using their rhetorical skills to maximum advantage. Other Christian writers were more uneasy about it. They were conscious that Jesus and his disciples had themselves been unlettered, and thought of Christian literature as having had equally lowly origins. Its style, termed the 'language of fishermen' (*sermo piscatorius*), had to be defended and justified; moreover, there had long been a tendency in Christian writing to contrast worldly learning and the 'tricks' of rhetoric with the 'true simplicity' of the faith.¹⁹ The fourth- and early-fifth-century Fathers justified or explained this situation in various ways, satirically contrasting Horace, Virgil and Cicero with the Psalms and the scriptures, like Jerome,²⁰ or facing the problem directly, as Augustine does in the *De Doctrina Christiana*, where he argues for the value of secular learning even while attempting to give proper weight to Pauline texts such as 1 Cor. 1.17–31 (cf. 27: 'God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise'). But 'simplicity' could also be an advantage, as Augustine well knew, in enabling churchmen to reach out to every member of their congregation. It had a powerful attraction for the conventionally educated. The *Life of Antony* attributed to Athanasius, generally regarded as the first Christian saint's life and one of the most influential literary productions of the fourth century, depicts Antony (d. A.D. 356) as having come from a family well enough off to send him to school; however, his ascetic renunciation implied the rejection of education and rhetoric along with rich food and other luxuries.²¹ The theme recurs as a standard component in the Greek monastic literature which begins to develop in the late fourth century, where the Egyptian monks and hermits are depicted either as illiterate peasants themselves, or else as men who have turned their backs on education along with other emblems of worldly attachment. Yet the Egyptian desert also attracted intellectuals like Evagrius Ponticus, and, once translated into Latin, the *Life of Antony* exercised a deep fascination on aristocratic Christian ladies in Rome and on the young professionals in Augustine's circle at Milan. Jerome, an enthusiastic proponent of the Latin version of the *Life*, composed his own supposedly artless lives of hermits (Paul, Malchus and Hilarion) in emulation of it; coming from such an

¹⁷ Socr. *HE* vi.3. ¹⁸ Brown, *Power and Persuasion* ch. 2.

¹⁹ Auerbach (1965) ch. 1; for Augustine, see Gillian Clark (1993) 70–82. The most accomplished Christian writers were adept at exploiting its advantages to the full: see Cameron, Averil, *Rhetoric of Empire*. e.g. 95, 112, and on literary style in Christian writing, cf. Roberts (1989) 124–47.

²⁰ *Ep.* 22.29. ²¹ *V. Ant.* 1, 80, 81.

author, they are of course highly sophisticated in their simplicity. The same Jerome wrote of the advantage to be gained by combining secular eloquence with careful study of the scriptures.²² On closer inspection, the *Life of Antony* itself is very far from being either 'popular' or simple.²³ It reflects a conception of the soul's search for God and a concern for Christian *gnosis* redolent of Origen, and its preoccupation with the ideological contrast between worldliness and simplicity is both artful and disingenuous. Antony, the allegedly simple hero who had rejected worldly culture, is represented as disputing with pagan philosophers, replying to imperial letters and delivering well-structured discourses. It was not an easy matter to balance the competing claims of traditional rhetoric and Christian communication. Sulpicius Severus, author of the late-fourth-century *Life of Martin*, felt it necessary to remind his readers that the kingdom of God rested on faith, not on rhetoric. But learning was also important: while the Roman ladies encouraged in the ascetic life by Jerome buried themselves in their houses and dressed in sackcloth, their conception of Christian simplicity also embraced a form of Christian literary patronage; they commissioned the copying of texts, and took Christian scholarship to the length of learning Hebrew themselves.²⁴ Even Jerome complained at the demands which Marcella placed on him for texts and for explanations of difficult passages.²⁵

The appeal of Christianity to the lower classes had been one of the taunts traditionally made against it by pagans; however, in this period of increasing confidence for the church, Christian 'simplicity' emerged as a useful rhetorical tool. Moreover, the catechetical aim demanded that all classes be considered, and many late-fourth-century bishops were adept communicators. Augustine was to the fore in addressing the issue overtly, and discussing the problems of the preacher in reaching an audience composed of confused masses, 'the straw of the Lord's threshing floor'.²⁶ John Chrysostom's homilies were preached in the very different urban setting of Constantinople and naturally address themselves to the vices of the rich city-dwellers there; yet even they show that he had all levels of the populace in mind.²⁷ Even though at this period bishops would normally be drawn from among the better-off (and Paulinus of Nola and Ambrose of Milan came from the élite), they were also acutely aware of the need to evangelize the uneducated, as is shown by Ambrose's concern for the evangelization of the countryside by his fellow bishops in north Italy. In their evangelizing, apologetic and didactic aims, willingness to combine modes of direct communication with the full apparatus of classical

²² *Ep.* 58.11, to Paulinus. ²³ Rubenson (1990) 126–32.

²⁴ Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 55; for Marcella's knowledge of Hebrew and zeal for Bible study see Kelly, *Jerome* 94f., and further below. ²⁵ *Ep.* 29.1, cf. 28.1. Paula's Hebrew: Kelly, *Jerome* 97.

²⁶ *De Rud. Catech.* vii.11. ²⁷ *Contra*, MacMullen (1989).

rhetoric gave Christians a distinct advantage, pursued with vigour in the favourable climate of imperial support. Not surprisingly, therefore, the fourth and early fifth centuries are marked by energetic experimentation with new forms, as well as with the adaptation of existing rhetorical techniques, not least in literary invective against Jews, pagans and their own religious opponents. John Chrysostom learned the technique of rhetorical *psogos* from Libanius, who used it against the theatre clique at Antioch, monks, imperial bureaucrats and his own rivals; Chrysostom in turn employed it to devastating effect in his homilies against Judaizers and in his attacks on the loose Christian discipline of his congregation.²⁸ As for heretics, Epiphanius of Salamis' catalogue of heresies, the so-called *Panarion* or 'Medicine-Chest', which belongs to the 370s, was to provide an unforgettable model for later writers in the genre.²⁹ To modern eyes it is a curious document, based as it is explicitly on classical treatises on poisons and bites and their antidotes, while drawing many of its formal details from the typology of the biblical Song of Songs. Yet this work too illustrates the experimentation and the vigour of some Christian writing in this period, as well as the adaptation of classical rhetoric to Christian uses.

Unlike their pagan counterparts, Christian writers had to engage with the Bible, thus owing a dual debt to their scriptural base and to their rhetorical training which occasionally led to curious results, such as the effort made by the two Apollinarii, father and son, to recast the scriptures into classical literary forms – epic, tragedy or Platonic dialogues.³⁰ In certain of the works of Eusebius of Caesarea, a great biblical scholar and Christian apologist, one can see how even someone who was himself steeped in scriptural models would present his Christian thinking in rhetorical dress; thus the preface to the *Life of Constantine* is couched in flowery language full of familiar rhetorical *topoi*, and Eusebius goes to some trouble in his presentation of his analogy between Constantine and Moses not to disturb the surface of what at least starts out as a conventional imperial encomium.³¹ Many Christian works, however, incorporated large numbers of scriptural citations and vocabulary. But while Greek-speaking Christians could cite the Septuagint (Hellenized Jews generally preferring the version of Aquila), the Latin translation of the Bible in use throughout the fourth century was highly unsatisfactory, until Jerome translated the entire Old Testament afresh direct from the Hebrew after intensive preliminary study; his translation (subsequently known together with the Latin New Testament as the Vulgate), which entailed rejecting the apocryphal books included in the Septuagint, was not finished until A.D. 405–6. Already in the 380s, however,

²⁸ See Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews* ch. 4; for the genre, Parkes (1934); Williams (1933).

²⁹ See ch. 19 above. ³⁰ For biblical epic see Roberts (1983).

³¹ *V. Const.* 1.12, 20, 38; 11.11–12; further below.

Jerome had revised the Old Latin (*Vetus Latina*) translation of the Gospels, also in a very confused state, by collating it against the Greek text. Typically, he defended the procedures he adopted in his Old Testament translation by hitting out vigorously at his critics, and with success, for despite various defects his version soon became standard. He conspicuously refrained from attempting to produce a translation in elegant literary Latin, justifying his procedure of keeping as close as possible to the original with the claim that the majority of Christians, being themselves uneducated and uncouth, needed a simple unadorned language. Thus, in one modern judgement, Jerome the stylist 'raised the vulgar Latinity of Christians to the heights of great literature'.³²

Vulgar or not, the linguistic and other influences which the Bible exerted on Christian writers were profound. Their works were studded with verbatim or near-verbatim quotations and allusions to scriptural passages; Augustine's *Confessions* is just such a mosaic, contrived with the utmost art and sophistication. One biblical text, the Song of Songs, exerted an enormous impact in this way, as can be seen through the many fourth-century allusions to it and commentaries on it; ironically, in spite of the developing controversies surrounding Origen, the example set by his third-century commentary on the Song of Songs effectively provided the key elements in the language and imagery of fourth-century ascetic writing. Biblical exegesis was a central feature of Christian literary activity – not only was it practised by all the leading writers but it also formed the basis of oral preaching. Here again, the habit of typology and the long tradition of allegorical interpretation gave to later Christian writing a distinctive and enhanced dependence on imagery and metaphor.³³ It would be difficult to overestimate the depth of this influence. It is true that we are still a long way here from a scripture-based culture founded on private reading and ready access to the Bible by individuals – all books, not just the scriptures, were far beyond the reach of any except the rich. But scriptural influence was also exercised indirectly, through preaching, liturgical recitation and teaching, and later through pictures; in so far as a Christian consciousness came into being, it was moulded by scriptural patterns, both inside and outside the Christian élite. It is worth asking, then, which models the scriptures most often provided in late antiquity – that is, which parts were most often used, and to what ends. They tended, very naturally, to be those which most closely engaged with contemporary concerns – the exemplary models of Moses and Job, or the book of Genesis for its cosmology, its support for divine providence over determinism and its relevance to issues such as those of

³² Kelly, *Jerome* 162. This period also saw the emergence of the Gothic Bible, attributed to Ulfilas under Constantius II: Socr. *HE* vi. 37; Philostorg. 11.5, above, ch. 16, pp. 487, 497.

³³ Song of Songs: Cameron, Averil, *Rhetoric of Empire*. 174–6, with bibliography; figurality and metaphor in Christian writing: *ibid.* ch. 5.

the creation of man in the image of God, the relation between the sexes, the origin of sin and the nature of Paradise. Less evident in this period are many of the themes for which later generations were to draw on the Bible – divine retribution, the last judgement, political liberty and civil disobedience, and the downfall of tyrants.

III. LITERARY EDUCATION AS A PATH TO ADVANCEMENT

The educational system itself remained extremely conservative. Prowess in traditional rhetoric was the pathway to advancement in late Roman society, as is exemplified most conspicuously by the career of Ausonius of Bordeaux. From being a provincial rhetor, Ausonius was summoned in the 350s to the court of Trier as tutor to the young Gratian, and rose under Gratian's father Valentinian to be quaestor; when the latter died and Gratian succeeded in A.D. 375, Ausonius was well placed to become praetorian prefect and consul, and to bestow his patronage on family and friends. As consul in 379 he turned his provincial background into a virtue by boasting of 'a city which is no mean one, a family which is nothing to be ashamed of, a home that is blameless';³⁴ however, disingenuous though his description may be, he also wrote frequently in his poems about Bordeaux, its countryside and its academic advantages (it was a considerable intellectual centre, many of whose teachers Ausonius praises in his collection of poems on the rhetors and *grammatici* of Bordeaux).³⁵ The poet Claudian is another example of provincial *litteratus* made good. Claudian came from Alexandria, where he received his early training within a predominantly Greek culture; yet his skill in Latin verse was such that he became a *tribunus et notarius* with the rank of *clarissimus*, the court poet of the powerful general Stilicho, and the author, in the interests of the western government, of a series of long and important political poems in polished Latin hexameters (see further below). A traditional education was a *sine qua non* for any public position above the lowest level. It consisted theoretically of three stages – learning to read and write, going to the grammarian for a thorough grounding in correct language and the works of the poets, and finally to the rhetor in order to study the orators and historians, and to learn how to compose in the appropriate style and language. In practice, however, the distinctions were often blurred, even though Diocletian's Edict on Maximum Prices (A.D. 301) laid down differential rates of pay for the teachers of the three grades.³⁶ By modern standards the curriculum was extremely limited at all stages: though arithmetic and other subjects were taught to some degree, education (*paideia*) was defined narrowly in terms of literary culture, taught in such a way as to inculcate the rules of rhetoric

³⁴ *Grat. Act.* xxxvi.

³⁵ On which see Green (1991) 328ff.; Sivan (1993).

³⁶ vii.66–71.

expounded in surviving rhetorical treatises. The effect was to produce pupils who would be distinguished from the rest of mankind by their superior, if narrow, skills.

The *grammaticus* or 'grammarian' was the backbone of this system;³⁷ fifteen such teachers are named by Ausonius, who had taught grammar himself, in his poem on the teachers of Bordeaux, and a grammarian is among the dramatic personages in the early-fifth-century *Saturnalia* of Macrobius. The *grammaticus'* role was to inculcate close acquaintance with a canon of classical literature, and in so doing to impart to his students competence in an archaic literary language very different from the spoken one. The study of grammar in the narrower and technical sense was essential to this aim. Jerome was sent to Rome by his father from Stridon in Dalmatia to be taught by Donatus, author of an *Ars Grammatica* as well as commentaries on Terence and Virgil (the latter destined to be used as the basis of Servius' own Virgil commentary in the fifth century). Jerome absorbed the lessons well, gaining a love of grammatical detail and often referring in later life to his early training. Terence, Cicero, Sallust and Virgil were staples, but Jerome also knew Plautus, Lucretius, Horace, Persius and Lucan, as well as Ovid, Seneca, Martial and Quintilian. Greek was taught up to a point in the west, but Jerome's own knowledge of Greek owed much to later study, and he did not acquire the same detailed knowledge of Greek as of Latin classical authors. But Ausonius prescribes Homer and Menander as reading for a grandson who is about to start learning with the *grammaticus*,³⁸ and we have some indication of the bilingual exercises that were used in the schools of Gaul from a later manuscript. A poem by Ausonius tells us about school life.³⁹ Drill and rote-learning were evidently the norm. Beating had always been common in ancient schools, and the dominance of the grammarian and his syllabus, which had changed little if at all since the early empire, sanctified certain classical authors of the past as models for imitation, and ensured the continued centrality of traditional literary culture among the élite of both parts of the empire throughout the period.

The training of the advanced pupil in what may be termed 'higher' education began with exercises known as *progymnasmata* in which he (for the pupils were overwhelmingly male) learnt to imitate examples of rhetorical tropes found in the classical authors,⁴⁰ and proceeded to declamation, the composition and performance of speeches on imaginary themes. The surviving treatises are hard to date, but the handbook on *progymnasmata* by Aphthonius is generally put in the late fourth century, the similar treatise attributed to Hermogenes apparently being somewhat earlier. The treatise

³⁷ Kaster, *Guardians of Language*. ³⁸ *Protr. ad Nep.* 45f. ³⁹ Aus. *Ephemeris*; see Dionisotti (1982).

⁴⁰ For the repertoire of examples, see Hock and O'Neill (1986).

on declamation by Sopatros may belong to the late fourth or more probably to the fifth century, while those on epideictic by Menander Rhetor have been attributed to the late third or early fourth century. Again, the sheer continuity of theory and practice is striking, as is the universality of this type of educational training. Public life now more than ever required the high-level rhetorical skills so painfully acquired by means of this long and expensive training, essential for every recruit to the enlarged late Roman bureaucracy or for the legal profession; even quite trivial late Roman documents are remarkable for the extravagance of their rhetoric. The system amounted to a form of recruitment to official or public careers based not so much on birth as on a form of education accessible to anyone with the requisite wealth or background. Within these limits, it encouraged social mobility, and laid no bar on anyone except that of the necessary degree of educational achievement. At the same time, it imposed a considerable degree of cultural conformity, and laid stress on that rather than on originality. Like the Chinese civil service under the Manchu emperors, entry to which was by competitive examination based on calligraphy, rhetoric and the study of set topics from Chinese classics, the late Roman official class found difficulty in adjusting its mentality in order to deal with 'barbarian' incomers. The empire-wide system of a thorough grounding in a small canon of classical texts, which pupils studied line by line, made for uniformity of outlook and even uniformity of language, while catering for the need for a constant supply of office-holders; since these posts were extremely desirable for financial and social reasons, and there was always, by the later fourth century, a large number of supernumeraries waiting for their turn, rhetorical training became even more desirable as time went on. The system affected everyone, Christians included. The more public forms of Christian oratory inevitably followed the same patterns as secular rhetoric – for instance, funeral orations such as that by Ambrose on the emperor Theodosius I – and the rules for encomium prescribed in the rhetorical handbooks exercised a profound influence on the development of Christian hagiography. Christians inherited the sense of importance attached to oratorical performance, as much in their homilies as in the public speeches of great bishops, with the result that the fourth century became a great age of revived eloquence, and the norms of classical rhetoric passed almost unnoticed into much of later Christian literature. But as we have seen, Christian writers were also uneasy about their debt to classical literary culture, and some kinds of Christian writing deliberately subverted it.

A modern observer cannot help but be struck by the absence from the curriculum of most of the subjects normally taught today. History and geography appear only incidentally, in relation to the subject matter of the classical texts studied, while the academic disciplines of arithmetic (aside

from basic counting, taught at the earliest stage), geometry and astronomy featured only in the context of philosophical studies. We have already mentioned the schools of Gaul, where Greek had for long been well established alongside Latin. At the 'University of Constantople' (a modern and misleading term), founded in A.D. 425 by Theodosius II, there were three rhetors and ten grammarians for Latin, five rhetors and ten grammarians for Greek, one professor of philosophy and two of law.⁴¹ Other major centres were Rome, where chairs of Greek and Latin rhetoric had been established by Vespasian in the first century A.D., Athens, where there were also rhetors, as well as considerably more philosophers, Alexandria, Antioch and Beirut, the home of legal education until the city was hit by a major earthquake in A.D. 551. The 'professors' received salaries, as apparently also did those grammarians and rhetors who were maintained by cities all over the empire, from Gaul to the east. In addition, since the time of Augustus such teachers had been exempted from municipal *munera*, a practice repeatedly confirmed in our period (by Constantine, Valentinian and Theodosius II).⁴² There had thus been a long tradition of emperors concerning themselves with the provision of higher education; by the fourth century they were as interventionist here as in other matters, and might even nominate individual teachers. Eventually all prospective local teachers had to be approved by the municipal council (the *curia*) and confirmed by the emperor; thus when Julian also restricted Christians from teaching,⁴³ thereby causing the famous convert Marius Victorinus to leave his post in Rome, he was, despite Ammianus' disapproval, in a sense merely extending an existing tendency. Christians were indignant at the measure, not only because it barred them from occupying these posts themselves, but also because access to the schools was so essential for public success that they were afraid for the prospects of their children: according to Ammianus, Julian showed equal lack of tact in lawsuits, when he was prone to ask at inappropriate moments what religion each of the parties professed.

This did not, of course, amount to a state-run system as we now know it, and despite this high-level attention to education, access to the system on the pupils' side was limited for the most part to those with above-average means. As grammarians, no less than rhetors, were based in towns, few opportunities presented themselves to the rural population. In the minds of ascetic Christians, education stood for travel as well as the other worldly snares of civilization, and indeed it was often necessary for a boy ambitious for higher education to go further afield than merely to the nearest large town.⁴⁴ Augustine complained of the unruliness of student

⁴¹ *C.Th.* xiv.9.3; *CJ* xi.19.1. ⁴² *C.Th.* xiii.3.1-3; x.16-18.

⁴³ *C.Th.* xiii.3.5; *Amm. Marc.* xxii.10. ⁴⁴ For an explicit statement see *V. Ant.* 20.

life at Carthage, and hoped to find things better in Rome,⁴⁵ but Libanius suggests that students at Athens could be rowdy too, and student life in Rome had to be regulated by a law of 370. The social origins of Libanius' pupils show the privileged status of those who were lucky enough to move on to higher education.⁴⁶ Teachers had to be paid, and even for *curiales* or landowners, this was often no easy matter, as is shown in the case of Augustine, who did not himself come from the wealthy ranks of his own little city. In these circumstances much of the population remained illiterate, or nearly so. To judge from the evidence of papyri, frequent use was made by ordinary people of professional scribes for both legal transactions and letter-writing, and there are many references to illiterates in other sources. While it has been argued that the level of literacy actually declined from what it had been in the early empire, perhaps under the influence of the disruption of the third century,⁴⁷ it is more probable that the level of literacy, however defined, had never been other than very low for the vast majority of the population in the empire.⁴⁸ But even in fourth-century Egypt, the province from which we have by far the most evidence, the actual extent of literacy is difficult to establish, and was probably higher than is usually imagined.⁴⁹ The question remains open; at least we can say, however, that the overall decline in the number of inscriptions in our period as compared with earlier ones is more likely to relate to changes in commemoration and in the relation of town and country than to any general decline in literacy or education,⁵⁰ especially in view of the voluminous quantity of official documents generated by the bureaucracy and the fact that Greek verse inscriptions proliferate, especially from the late fourth century onwards (see p. 694 below).

Whether Christianity acted as an incentive to literacy, as has often been supposed, is difficult to demonstrate directly, for much Christian teaching was propagated orally or through pictures like the figural mosaics which begin to adorn the interiors of churches from the end of the fourth century. Christianity certainly did call forth certain kinds of book production, like the fifty copies of the scriptures which Constantine commissioned from Eusebius for the new city of Constantinople (*V. Const.* iv.36), and inspired a new kind of scholarship among some of its well-to-do adherents. Christians initiated the copying of religious texts, though they were also among the patrons of secular learning who edited and copied classical texts in late-fourth-century Rome (see p. 695 below). What is more

⁴⁵ *Conf.* v.7.14.

⁴⁶ Petit, *Libanius*.

⁴⁷ E.g. MacMullen (1976) 58ff.

⁴⁸ So Kaster, *Guardians of Language* 35–47; the chronological terms within which decline is posited by Harris, *Ancient Literacy* 285, are extremely wide (third to seventh centuries), and include the period of the main barbarian invasions and break-up of the western empire.

⁴⁹ See Bagnall, *Egypt* ch. 7; Wipszycka (1984).

⁵⁰ As assumed by Harris, *Ancient Literacy* 287–8.

striking, perhaps, in relation to Christianity in our period is the use it made of a combination of oral and written dissemination; Christians heard hymns, psalms, homilies and readings on a regular basis, and were in addition exhorted to study the scriptures at home.⁵¹ Their use of books did not so much affect the level of literacy as change the uses to which it was put. They were, for example, eager to exploit the new Christian oratory, using stenographers to record sermons as they were delivered, a technique also extended to other kinds of Christian public utterances. While it is indeed difficult to demonstrate the proposition that Christianity was spread to any great extent by the written word during the first three centuries,⁵² the volume of Christian writing greatly increased during our period, as the official favour now shown to the church allowed Christians access to a greatly enlarged audience, together with the opportunity to develop literary forms hitherto the preserve of pagans.

Public oratory, for which rhetorical skills were essential, was another field entered by Christians during the fourth century. Eusebius delivered speeches on the dedication of the new church at Tyre and more than one on the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in A.D. 335;⁵³ but he also delivered in the presence of the emperor at Constantinople an encomium on the thirtieth anniversary of Constantine's accession (335–6), setting out his conception of worldly empire as the microcosm of God's rule. Bishops were favoured by Constantine and his son Constantius II, so long, of course, as their views were acceptable. Nor did Constantine hesitate to pronounce discourses which amounted to virtual sermons.⁵⁴ Julian, another imperial orator, after having had to deliver an embarrassing encomium on the hated Constantius II, turned to more congenial subjects after he had become emperor himself. Ammianus depicts Valentinian introducing the young Gratian to the army and then speaking to Gratian himself in suitably high-minded orations.⁵⁵ But Christian emperors also employed pagan orators such as Themistius, who served Constantius II and later emperors. Every imperial occasion required skilled orators, particularly for encomia and congratulatory speeches, and it was not surprising that men with the requisite training found themselves preferred; funerary orations, of which Ambrose's speech on the death of Theodosius I is a famous example, again brought bishops into this domain. Similar requirements held good at the local levels of urban life, with its continued public occasions and emphasis on civic values. Themistius, himself a pagan, though writing for Christian

⁵¹ K. Hopkins, commenting on Harris's book, in Humphrey (1991) 73f.

⁵² Harris, *Ancient Literacy* 299.

⁵³ Among several others delivered on that occasion: *V. Const.* IV.45; cf. IV.33 for Constantine's flattering reaction.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* IV.29; the surviving *Oration to the Saints* is one such discourse, cf. IV.32.

⁵⁵ Amm. Marc. XXVII.6.

emperors, shared the civic mentality of Julian, Libanius and Ammianus, emphasizing the traditional values of the curial class, while the many orations of Libanius, composed throughout a teaching career in Antioch and Constantinople, put the precepts of the schools to practical purpose on a wide range of contemporary topics. Despite the complaints in the literary sources about the state of cities during the fourth century, these cities still provided the training and the opportunity for the exercise of oratory. In the case of the so-called 'affair of the statues' at Antioch in 387, we have a rare chance to compare Christian and pagan speeches directly, since we have surviving examples from both John Chrysostom and Libanius; though they naturally use different repertoires of *exempla*, at a deeper level they are strikingly similar. Bishops such as Gregory of Nazianzus and others in the east or Ambrose in the west gave a new life to public speaking. They did so in the context of a lively environment of which they were themselves also the products.

But classical rhetoric did not account for the entirety of the higher education that was on offer in the period. On the fringes of the empire in the east, the deacon Ephrem, the greatest writer in Syriac of the fourth century, left Nisibis for Edessa when the former was ceded to the Sasanians by Jovian in 363 and spent the last ten years of his life there, where he is traditionally associated with the 'School of the Persians'. The theological and catechetical School of Edessa flourished until its connection with Nestorianism and the latter's condemnation in the fifth century led to its closure. This period was also important for the steady development of the Jerusalem or Palestinian Talmud, and for the Jewish academies in Palestine, principally at Sepphoris and Tiberias. This was not necessarily the internalized and defensive reaction it has often seemed. Moreover, while the many different elements which form the Talmud were recorded in Hebrew and Aramaic, Jerome, for example, became familiar with rabbinic scholarship through the medium of Greek during his own stay in the Holy Land. Even though imperial policy towards Jews hardened in the late fourth century, and the Jewish patriarchate was abolished (A.D. 438), the Jews in Palestine enjoyed a period of distinct material prosperity, during which rabbinic and scholarly traditions continued alongside strong Hellenizing influences. Outside Palestine, in the substantial Diaspora communities in cities such as Antioch, Apamea, Sardis and elsewhere, Greek is the main attested language, and the language in which Jews will have communicated with their neighbours. The Septuagint translation gave way in popularity in these communities during this period to that of Aquila, and both were in use even in the Holy Land, especially, no doubt, in the more Hellenized cities like Caesarea.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ The relation between the rabbinic learning of Palestine and the Jews of the Diaspora in our period is hard to establish: Millar (1992) 110; for the school in Palestine see also ch. 14 above, p. 454.

IV. NEOPLATONISM

Christians and pagans alike were deeply influenced by Neoplatonism, and especially by certain key texts. Julian was introduced under Aedesius at Pergamum to Iamblichan Neoplatonism, with its emphasis on mysticism and the ritual of theurgy,⁵⁷ and imbibed a deep respect for the so-called *Chaldaean Oracles* (on which both Porphyry and Iamblichus wrote commentaries) from Maximus of Ephesus; by the second half of the fourth century, however, translation into Latin was of central importance for the diffusion of Neoplatonic writings in the west. Marius Victorinus, converted to Christianity in old age, translated Plotinus and Porphyry into Latin. In the 380s Augustine obtained and read these and other Platonist books, as Ambrose had done before him; while the 'Platonic books' did not contain all that he was looking for, they led him, he says, in the direction of God,⁵⁸ and he remained Neoplatonist in his anthropology and epistemology. Jerome knew Plato's *Timaeus*, possibly in the original, or more likely in the Latin translation by Cicero, while Macrobius made much use of the Neoplatonist commentary on the *Timaeus* by Porphyry; yet another commentary on the *Timaeus* was composed by Chalcidius in the fourth century. Certain of Plato's other works also lent themselves well to Christian use, especially the *Phaedrus*, on the soul, a basic model for Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina* and probably also for Gregory of Nazianzus' *Apologeticus*. Many other works, like Synesius' *De Regno* and *De Providentia*,⁵⁹ show the extent of the general debt to Plato among cultured writers. The boundary between philosophy and rhetoric was thus apt to be blurred. The thought of Themistius, for instance, orator and spokesman for emperors, who himself taught philosophy at Constantinople, came with strong Platonic overtones,⁶⁰ as had the Christian political theory of Eusebius, formed around the Logos theology of Origen and the Platonized kingship theory of Dio Chrysostom.⁶¹ Around 400, Eunapius of Sardis (died c. 414), a pupil at Athens of the Christian Prohaeresius, composed a set of *Lives of the Sophists* in which 'sophists', or rhetors, are seen more as idealized philosophers than as teachers of rhetoric.

Thus quite apart from the more specialized Neoplatonic schools, such as the school of Aedesius at Pergamum, or the Academy at Athens, re-established by the end of the fourth century, a general acquaintance with Platonism (though far less often real technical knowledge) was part of the intellectual background of many, perhaps even most, cultured persons. This was even more the case in view of the mobility of both students and

⁵⁷ For the importance of Iamblichus, see Athanassiadi (1992), (1993); *Chaldaean Oracles*: Lewy (1978). ⁵⁸ *Conf.* vii.26-7; cf. ix.13, 16.

⁵⁹ Cameron and Long, *Barbarians and Politics*, with earlier bibliography.

⁶⁰ Dagron, 'Thémistios'.

⁶¹ Farina (1966); Calderone (1985).

teachers. Eunapius' collection of biographical notices illustrates the easy slide from rhetoric to philosophy and thence to religion; like Themistius and Eunapius himself (also the author of a lost but strongly pagan history – see p. 700 below), many of his subjects are pagan. The diffusion of Neoplatonic, and pagan, ideas, and indeed their interrelation with Christian themes, is demonstrated by splendid fourth-century mosaics from Apamea in Syria, where Iamblichus had taught in the early fourth century, which depict the Seven Sages with Socrates and the myth of Cassiopeia. The latter is also paralleled at New Paphos in Cyprus, where six mosaic panels show, as well as Cassiopeia, scenes from the story of Dionysus, among them the baby Dionysus seated on the lap of Hermes, evidence, perhaps of a Christianizing of pagan mythology.⁶² Further discoveries at Apamea show the seven liberal arts under the guise of handmaidens (*therapainides*), whom Odysseus leaves as he returns to Philosophy, represented by Penelope.⁶³

Neoplatonist educational theory also exerted lasting influence. The idea of a regular progress of studies leading to a certain goal is found in Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras*, and again Iamblichus seems to have been an influential figure in the development of a Neoplatonist educational system.⁶⁴ The appearance of a sevenfold system of 'liberal arts' in Augustine's *De Ordine* has recently been traced to Neoplatonic sources, rather than originating in the Hellenistic period as previously supposed,⁶⁵ and Augustine himself went so far as to embark on a series of treatises on each of the seven sciences (completing only grammar and music). Educational theory and development feature among Augustine's manifold interests, both in his accounts of babies and young children in the *Confessions*, and in more theoretical guise in the *De Magistro*. However, the *De Ordine*, already mentioned, belongs to a period soon after his conversion, when he was still deeply influenced by Neoplatonism; in his later work on Christian education, the *De Doctrina Christiana*, where his focus was that of a bishop rather than that of a philosopher, a wider range of ancillary disciplines is recommended, not for themselves, but strictly as aids towards the interpretation of the scriptures. But Martianus Capella, in his *De Nuptiis* (*Marriage of Mercury and Philology*, c. A.D. 400), also took up the idea of the seven liberal arts, in an elaborate and artificial work which also praises theurgy and divination. This is the realm of learned theory rather than practice. In such indirect ways as these, Neoplatonist educational ideas gradually penetrated late antique theory, and prepared the way for the medieval curriculum. In Alexandria, during the same period as Augustine and Martianus Capella, Hypatia (killed by a Christian crowd, A.D. 415) was teaching Neoplatonist philosophy and writing treatises on

⁶² For discussion, see Bowersock, *Hellenism* 49f. ⁶³ Balty (1992); see also Sorabji (1990) 9–10.

⁶⁴ See O'Meara (1989). ⁶⁵ Hadot (1984) 101–36; Martianus Capella: *ibid.* 137–55.

mathematics,⁶⁶ while her pupil Synesius advocated in the *Dion* a Neoplatonist conception of education as consisting of 'lower' subjects, such as rhetoric and poetry, which are propaedeutic to the highest educational aim, which is the contemplation of reality.⁶⁷

Those who studied philosophy as such generally did so as a more specialized continuation of a rhetorical training. The latter came in many forms, depending on location and on the contacts and purse of parents. The great revival of the Academy at Athens as the centre of late Neoplatonism is mainly associated with Proclus (d. A.D. 485). In the fourth century, the most notable figures at Athens were Prohairesius and Himerius, both rhetoricians, or 'sophists', and famous orators. But while Himerius' speeches survive in quantity, the volume of his work is nothing to that of Libanius, who taught at Constantinople and Nicomedia, but who is best known for his dominant influence at Antioch between 354 and his death in the 390s. Libanius was not a philosopher but an epideictic orator in the classical manner, whose speeches range from pieces composed for particular occasions to others dealing with more political or civic issues. His many surviving declamations, set-pieces serving as models for the instruction of his numerous pupils, tend to be on traditional mythological or historical themes. As in modern times, therefore, individual centres of education took their particular colour from the influence of individual teachers, and the experience of the students varied accordingly – with the difference, however, that as there was of course no registration or examination structure, it was possible and common for the students to go from place to place in order to be taught by a particularly famous teacher.

V. LEGAL AND OTHER STUDIES

The main alternative to rhetoric in late Roman higher education was law, which occupied an important place in the bureaucratic system.⁶⁸ By the fourth century the collections of Papinian, Paulus, Ulpian and Modestinus were in place as the authoritative sources for private law (Valentinian added Gaius in 426),⁶⁹ and imperial legislation proliferated, though there was no official attempt at codification until the *Codex Theodosianus* (A.D. 438): the two Diocletianic collections, the *Codex Gregorianus* and the *Codex Hermogenianus* (in its earlier versions) were unofficial and made by individuals. The lack of copies made when constitutions were promulgated, and the inadequacy of their publication, must have made for an extraordinary degree of confusion, and was doubtless a factor in the development of professionalization. The legal profession itself was rigidly organized, but

⁶⁶ Beretta (1993); Cameron and Long, *Barbarians and Politics* 39–46. ⁶⁷ *Dion* 8.2–7.

⁶⁸ See ch. 5 above, pp. 162–9, and on the Code, Harries and Wood (1993). ⁶⁹ *C.Th.* 1.4.3.

could be lucrative, especially at the higher levels; more important, it might give the entrée to rank and dignity, and, by the fifth century at least, it counted as a branch of the bureaucracy, with the attendant benefits which that entailed. Legal training as such was not yet essential in the fourth century, though professional training was on offer, and there were chairs at Rome and Constantinople, and a law school at Berytus. Libanius complains that young men were going straight to their legal studies without having had a proper education in rhetoric.⁷⁰ Thus our period seems to be marked by a gradual development towards specialization, which reached its culmination in the sixth century, when detailed regulations existed for the legal training provided at Berytus; even at this date, Latin was essential for lawyers in the eastern empire as well as in the west. But the fourth-century constitutions included in the *Codex Theodosianus* give ample evidence of the rhetorical training which their drafters will have received; verbose, moralizing and pretentious, they must have purveyed a sense of the imperial majesty, though to us they often succeed only in being obscure. As well as rhetoric, philosophy and law, medicine was taught – as at Alexandria; more commonly, it was taught by the doctors themselves, who were maintained by cities or by the court; they had a similar status to that of teachers, and some (especially the court doctors) reached the rank of *comes* or higher. Public posts were few, but there were also private doctors just as there were private teachers. However, medicine could equally be combined with philosophical interests, as it was for example in the case of Nemesius of Emesa. The emperors also concerned themselves about the supply and privileges of architects or what we might term engineers, but for these too a liberal education was expected.

The reasons for the vigour of both Christian and pagan literary activity during the fourth century must be sought in general social conditions rather than in any development within the educational system. Increased competition for advancement in the late Roman bureaucratic system, or for prestige within the élite, and the tensions and adjustments caused by the move of Christianity into the public sphere provided powerful incentives for spending time and money on the traditional training offered by grammarians and rhetors. The possibility of patronage and the opportunity for advancement were important stimulants to secular letters; thus a Latin literary centre was created in Gaul by the presence of the court and the development of schools there. Christian writing, on the other hand, was stimulated by internal controversy and by the Christian propaganda offensive, and was multi-centred, from Cappadocia to the Egyptian desert, and from Carthage to Milan. It was a period of unprecedented literary energy, and the rhetorical education thus revived was to continue long

⁷⁰ Or. 11.43–4.

afterwards, not only beyond the establishment of the Germanic kingdoms in the west, but also into the Byzantine period, where it formed the basis of education for many centuries to come.

VI. HISTORY-WRITING AND ITS CONTEXT

By no means all fourth-century literature was clearly distinguishable as 'classical' or Christian. The issue was simply unimportant in the case of some genres – for instance, didactic or practical works. Moreover, the very term 'literature' needs to be taken in a broad sense. The place of history-writing, for instance, had always stood high in the ranks of classical literature, though in our period Christian historians, epitomators and chroniclers approached it pragmatically and with didactic purpose (see p. 688 below). As Momigliano argued, the brief Latin epitomes of men like Aurelius Victor, Eutropius and Festus, themselves imperial officials in the generation after Constantine, filled a need felt by the new governing class of the fourth century, in particular the men promoted by Valentinian and Valens and their sons. Aurelius Victor caught the attention of Julian, with whom Eutropius also served, and the latter, having been *magister epistularum* under Constantius, was, like Festus, *magister memoriae* to Valens, to whom he dedicated his work, and went on to become prefect of Illyricum under Theodosius I (380–1); Eutropius was among the correspondents of Symmachus, and attained the honour of being appointed consul in the same year as the emperor Valentinian II (387).⁷¹ The short and workman-like productions of these writers have no particular religious axe to grind; they are more interested in imperial character, the role of the senate and (in the case of Festus and Eutropius) the eastern frontier, serving imperial interests by promoting the idea of a more aggressive foreign policy against Persia. Except that Festus' work is briefer, there is not much to choose between them, though Eutropius' *Breviarium* achieved the distinction of being translated into Greek; all belong to a larger group of similar or related works, including the so-called *Origo Gentis Romanae*, the *De Viris Illustribus*, covering between them legendary times to the fall of the republic, and the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, brief imperial biographies from Augustus to Theodosius. A shared source was the lost chronicle of the second and third centuries composed under Diocletian or Constantine and known as Enmann's *Kaisergeschichte* after E. Enmann, who first posited its existence.⁷² Another of these brief and anonymous works, first edited by Henri de Valois (1636), is the *Origo Constantini*,⁷³ probably written under Constantius

⁷¹ *PLRE* 1, s.v.; see Momigliano, *Conflict*.

⁷² Enmann (1884); Schmidt accepts its use by Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, Festus, the *SHA* and the *Epitome de Caesaribus* (see Herzog (1989) no. 336).

⁷³ König (1987) argues for a date post A.D. 380; see however Barnes (1989).

II, which preserves details about Constantine not found elsewhere and for the most part presents him from a pagan or religiously neutral standpoint, despite subsequent interpolations from the early-fifth-century Christian historian Orosius. The existence of early accounts more hostile to Constantine and the Christian empire can be deduced from later Byzantine chronicles, and the pagan history of Eunapius, followed closely by Zosimus, took a line similar to the scornful picture of Constantine drawn in Julian's *Caesares*, but Ammianus, independent as usual, seems to have kept his religious criticism muted.⁷⁴ Also from the late fourth century came the lost *Annales* by the leading pagan senator Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, whose son of the same name was the editor of Livy. The work is indicated in two inscriptions, in one of which Flavianus is termed *historicus disertissimus*.⁷⁵ But tempting as it has been to many to see the *Annales* as a pagan manifesto, in view of Flavianus' attachment to the cause of the usurper Eugenius, on whose defeat in 394 he committed suicide, we have no actual information even about the period which the work may have covered.

The relationship between this and other pagan historical works remains highly contentious, with the result that their importance has been much exaggerated. Ammianus Marcellinus is famously scathing about the reading-habits and general tastes of the Roman aristocracy in the 370s and 380s, depicting them as interested only in sensational biography, and in writers like Juvenal and Marius Maximus.⁷⁶ Indeed, one of the most scabrous of the potted biographies was being put together while he was living in Rome himself and completing his own history there in the early 390s. Probably most scholars would now agree that the *Historia Augusta*, a set of imperial biographies running from A.D. 96 to the accession of Diocletian, is the work of one author of the late fourth century rather than of the six outlandishly named 'Constantinian' authors claimed in the work itself. There is also less of a tendency nowadays to read it as yet another work of pagan propaganda against Christians. Ronald Syme indeed argued that the work was intended as a playful literary fiction, to suit exactly the reading public described so memorably by Ammianus. But the date and sources of the *Historia Augusta* remain a vexed question, and the controversy is not yet likely to die down. There is very little to go on; one should also remember that the Roman senatorial class itself was by no means homogeneous, so that generalizations about its tastes or affiliations can be as misleading as Ammianus' blanket condemnation. Two military treatises perhaps also belong with this group – the anonymous *De Rebus Bellicis*, an intriguing pamphlet apparently addressed to Valentinian and Valens in the

⁷⁴ Matthews, *Ammianus* 447–50; the so-called 'Leoquelle': Bleckmann (1991). Eunapius: Blockley (1981–3); and Ammianus: Matthews, *Ammianus* 164–75.

⁷⁵ *ILS* 2947.

⁷⁶ *Amm. Marc.* xxviii.4; cf. xiv.6.

late 360s, and proposing a series of ingenious inventions whereby to restore the success of the Roman armies, yet showing clear links with the pagan historiographical tradition,⁷⁷ and a Christian, though not a sectarian, work, Vegetius' *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, a conservative military handbook probably dedicated to Theodosius I and consisting of a mixture of rhetorical display and practical information. Vegetius' short preface, in which he links his own with earlier works of rhetoric dedicated to emperors, and his Virgilian quotations demonstrate the effects of a standard rhetorical education; the author, who is likely also to have composed a surviving treatise on horse and cattle ailments, writes his technical work in the traditional mode directed at laymen.⁷⁸

Against such a background the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus, a 'lonely historian' in many senses, stands out all the more.⁷⁹ His is (so far as we know) the only history in Latin on the grand scale after Tacitus, with whose work it deserves to be compared. For energy, vividness and sustained power of writing it can hardly be matched in any period of classical literature, and certain subjects, especially the military narratives of Julian in Gaul as Caesar and in the east as emperor, will always be seen through Ammianus' eyes. Ammianus was a pagan, but his relation to the remaining pagan aristocrats in Rome and to Roman literary circles remains one of the many mysteries which still surround the man and his work. The surviving portion ends in book xxxi with the disaster of Adrianople in 378 but begins only at book xiv, taking up the narrative in 354 with Constantius II; thus what we have covers a period of only twenty-five years out of the whole. Since Ammianus tells us in his famous concluding remarks that he had begun at the accession of Nerva in A.D. 96,⁸⁰ the earlier part (257 years), or most of it, must have been covered far more briefly. In the same passage he refers to himself as *miles quondam et Graecus*, a phrase which expresses, by contemporary standards, a twofold paradox. Not many ex-soldiers would have been likely to compose a work of such power and range, and the *Res Gestae* does indeed bear many traces of Greek as a language and of Greek styles of historiography. Ammianus combines a deep reverence for Rome and a passionate advocacy of Roman virtues such as *moderatio* with a late antique love of curious information and long digressions.⁸¹ We still do not know how he came to compose his history in Rome, in Latin, or under what patrons, if any. But Ammianus no longer appears the herald of decline that earlier critics saw in him. He expresses his approval of the traditional Roman virtues of moderation, caution and restraint in language which verges on the extravagant; his pages are full of unforgettable phrases. In the course of his account of the Persian siege of Amida in 359, in which

⁷⁷ See Hassall and Ireland (1979).

⁷⁸ Some argue for Valentinian III (425–455) as dedicatee; see Milner (1993) xxv f.

⁷⁹ See Momigliano (1974). ⁸⁰ xxxi.16. ⁸¹ Matthews, *Ammianus* 462f.

he took part himself, he describes the frustration of Ursicinus, unable to implement his plan of diverting the attackers: 'all his helpful schemes could effect nothing. He was like a lion of huge size and grim aspect which does not dare to go to the rescue of its trapped whelps because it has lost its claws and teeth.'⁸² Ammianus was acutely aware of colour and of visual effects, whether in his famous account of Constantius II's entry into Rome in 357,⁸³ or in details such as his observation of how carefully the senators in Rome showed off their fringed and decorated tunics.⁸⁴ Nor did the unsavoury tactics of Christian pressure groups escape his attention,⁸⁵ any more than the vices of the Roman aristocrats, which he satirizes scathingly and memorably.⁸⁶ The surviving books offer an exciting panorama of military history and a sympathetic, though detached, portrayal of the career of the admired Julian; but later, Rome became Ammianus' theme, and in the last books the scope narrows. In this part of the work the moral and political behaviour of the upper classes absorbed him, just as it had his predecessor Tacitus. Such is the stature of Ammianus' work that it does not need to be explained in terms of literary models; yet while the differences are many, he is fully Tacitus' equal in literary genius and moral seriousness.

In what sense is Ammianus a late antique writer? His importance was amply recognized by Gibbon in the reliance which he placed on the work of 'the philosophic soldier', while he has been read by Auerbach as reflecting that breakdown of classical styles which the latter took as heralding the Middle Ages, and by others – for example, R. MacMullen – as providing vivid insights into the social *mores* of the period, as well as evidence of its alleged decline and corruption.⁸⁷ He is a major historian on any count, and one whose range and geographical scope are far greater than had previously been seen among Roman historians. He belongs to his age in many ways, not least in the fact that he writes as a member of a bureaucracy whose officials were liable to find themselves in any part of the empire, and who were in close contact with numerous others like themselves, both civilian and military. It is Ammianus who gives us our best information both about the late Roman army in action and about the extraordinary juxtapositions of life in imperial and senatorial circles. Finally, it is Ammianus the writer who, once read, is never forgotten.

Eunapius of Sardis covered some of the same events as Ammianus and had access to good information about Julian's Persian campaign; though comparison is hindered by the facts that his work is preserved only indirectly through its use by the pagan historian Zosimus in the late fifth or early sixth century, and the dates of the successive editions are

⁸² XIX.3. ⁸³ XVI.10. ⁸⁴ XIV.6.9.

⁸⁵ XXVII.3.5, the election of Pope Damasus; however, while Ammianus himself was clearly not a Christian, Petronius Probus' Christianity is not included in the impressive list of the latter's faults at XXVII.11. ⁸⁶ XXVIII.4. ⁸⁷ Auerbach (1953) ch. 3; MacMullen (1964), *Corruption*.

controversial, Matthews argues that Ammianus did use it for details of Julian's Persian campaign. Ammianus' work has resemblances of scope and style to the Greek classicizing tradition of which Eunapius was a main representative, and is written with the same aspirations to high style and traditional form. But the *Res Gestae* differs fundamentally in its 'moral and dramatic intention';⁸⁸ in other words, it is simply better and more serious history. It is also distinct in its general lack of religious bias, unlike the notoriously anti-Christian stance of Eunapius, which also comes through strongly in Zosimus. Ammianus is no pagan propagandist – while he is outspoken in his criticism of Christians when they break the bounds of moderation, he is no more so in their case than in that of other groups. Julian's edict directed at Christian teachers, which we might have expected Ammianus to approve, is one of the few points singled out for criticism in his obituary of the emperor,⁸⁹ and religion in general receives little prominence in the history. Not all fourth-century writers were obsessed with religion, it seems. On the other hand, the consequent degree of distortion of recent history entailed by the selectivity and omissions of religious matters in Ammianus' account is also something to bear in mind.⁹⁰ But there are other omissions in his work too, notably in relation to the reasons for the failure of Julian's Persian expedition, and the defeat of Valens at Adrianople; nor does he venture easily into topics which might be construed as criticism of Theodosius I, who was on the throne when he finished his history.

Eunapius was to be followed by an impressive list of Greek secular historians, from Olympiodorus in the fifth century to Procopius, writing under Justinian, and finally to Theophylact Simocatta, writing under Heraclius. But history was also a key area where religious divisions might be expected to show themselves. The first in the field of church history had been Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, to which the final revisions were made after Constantine's defeat of Licinius in 324 and before the council of Nicaea in the following year. After Eusebius, historiography diverged into church history on the one side and secular classicizing history on the other. They differed in a number of obvious ways: in scope and content (the history of the church as against the traditional subject matter of wars, politics and court affairs), treatment (secular historians aimed at high style, which precluded them from citing the documents which are such a feature of Eusebius' work), ideology (church history located itself within a temporal frame dictated by the sense of God's purpose for the world, from the creation to the second coming), and finally, presumably, audience (those who read church histories only sometimes coincided with the educated élite

⁸⁸ Matthews, *Ammianus* 164–75; see also 445–6.

⁸⁹ xxv.4 (see above).

⁹⁰ Barnes, *Athanasius* 166–7.

and pagan officials who formed the audience for the secular works). The writers of ecclesiastical history tended to be bishops, like Eusebius, though Socrates and Sozomen, the authors of two such works written in Constantinople in the 440s, were both lawyers. Eusebius' history was not continued until the now lost work of Gelasius of Caesarea late in the fourth century and the Latin version by Rufinus of Aquileia. The major surviving Greek church histories following Eusebius all belong to the mid fifth century, with a Eunomian church history by Philostorgius, the works of Socrates and Sozomen, and the church history of Theodoret of Cyrrhus in northern Syria.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the differences between ecclesiastical and secular history can be exaggerated. Secular historians did not exclude Christian material altogether, while ecclesiastical historians, beginning with Eusebius, necessarily also included secular matter. Ammianus did not exclude mention of Christians from the *Res Gestae*, even though he was not particularly impressed by what he saw of them. The two types could show similarity even in their presentation of historical causation and their admission of the miraculous.⁹² Nor did Christian controversialists make historiography their main arena, preferring polemical or apologetic treatises, letters and works of exegesis (see pp. 696–704 below). The religious divisions of the post-Constantinian period, not to mention Eusebius' own tendency towards Arianism, also made the idea of a continuation of Eusebius' work highly sensitive.⁹³ But the fact that church history as a genre developed within the context of the church itself helped to maintain a degree of separation.

It is easy to underestimate the uniqueness and variety of Eusebius' own contribution. Biblical scholar, protagonist in contemporary church politics, and prolific writer, Eusebius was also a propagandist of Constantine; not only did he establish the twin genres of church history and Christian chronicle; he also laid down, in his later works, the *Tricennialian Oration* (A.D. 336) and the *Life of Constantine* (*Vita Constantini*),⁹⁴ the essentials of a political philosophy for a Christian empire. Of these late works, the *Life of Constantine*, nowadays agreed to have been written by Eusebius, is particularly curious; it was little read in the fourth century, if at all, though it was used by the fifth-century church historians, and it is in literary terms an awkward mixture of panegyric and narrative.⁹⁵ In the elaborately self-justifying preface Eusebius draws on the conventions of the *basilikos logos* as prescribed by Menander Rhetor, even to the extent of including the

⁹¹ The works by Gelasius of Caesarea and Philostorgius survive only in fragments; for bibliography see Winkelmann in Winkelmann and Brandes (1990) 202–12; Philostorgius' dependence on an 'Arian history' of the 360s: Bidez and Winkelmann (1991) 208–9, with Brennecke (1988) 92–5; 114–57.

⁹² See Ruggini (1977), (1981). ⁹³ Clark (1992) 181–2.

⁹⁴ The *V. Const.* recounts the death of Constantine, A.D. 337; chapter headings were added after Eusebius' own death, which followed soon afterwards, perhaps A.D. 339.

⁹⁵ Barnes (1989), building on Pasquali (1910); see however Cameron, Averil (1997b).

prescribed comparison of Constantine with the great kings Cyrus and Alexander. But the main body of the work, at least in the narrative up to the final defeat of Licinius, adopts a Christian typology and casts the emperor in the role of Moses and likens the ending of the persecutions to the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. Christian hagiography had not yet taken shape when Eusebius wrote (Antony did not die until 356), yet the *Life* seems to foreshadow its future development: Constantine's selection by God, Eusebius claims, was manifested by signs, the greatest of which is the emperor's vision before the battle of the Milvian Bridge, inserted here into an account taken closely from the much earlier narrative of the same events in the author's own *Ecclesiastical History*, but here adapted and subtly enhanced.⁹⁶ Eusebius' tendentiousness in the *Vita Constantini* has occupied modern scholars since Burckhardt, particularly in relation to the many documents included on the model of the documents quoted in and appended to the *Ecclesiastical History*. But the *Life* also attempted to present a Christian emperor in the guise of a holy man; thus it was an answer, in literary terms, to the *Lives* of pagan holy men by Eusebius' *bête noire* Porphyry and others,⁹⁷ and a demonstration of how he saw the role of Constantine in the Christian providential scheme of history. The latter view, already inherent in the closing section of the *Ecclesiastical History*, a work conceived without that end in view,⁹⁸ found deeper expression in the group of later works as Eusebius pondered the implications of what it would mean to have a Christian state. If the *Life of Constantine* was indeed an experiment in Christian hagiography, this was a sensationally bold stroke on Eusebius' part.

In several other ways, too, Eusebius was ahead of his time. His *Chronicle* drew together several existing chronological systems into a continuous synthesis of world history from creation to the present day and beyond it to the expected second coming. It was to be copied and emulated countless times, both in the medieval west and in Byzantium, but the Greek version is lost, though an early Armenian one survives, and Jerome translated the work into Latin and continued it. The *Chronicle* imposed the conception of Christian time; it was built on the idea of a narrative, what the Christians called the 'economy' of salvation, whereby God's plan for the world was demonstrated in the movement of history, and specifically in the history of the Roman empire. The assumptions on which it rested found expression in other works by Eusebius, notably his *Preparation for the Gospel*,

⁹⁶ *V. Const.* 1.28f.; cf. *HE* ix.9.9; for the technique, and the relation of *HE* and *V. Const.*, see Hall (1993).

⁹⁷ That Eusebius was fully aware of the tradition of pagan 'lives' may also be seen, if it is actually by Eusebius, from the *Contra Hieroclem*, an answer to the anti-Christian arguments which Hierocles had based on Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*; for pagan *Lives* see further below.

⁹⁸ For the date and successive editions see Barnes (1980); Louth (1990).

Demonstration of the Gospel and *Theophany* (the latter surviving only in Syriac).⁹⁹ Time, creation and the creation narratives in Genesis were all to become central themes in fourth-century theological writing. However, the questions about providence and the history of the Roman empire which had been raised by Eusebius were addressed most directly and with the most sophisticated arguments only in Augustine's *City of God* (A.D. 413–26). Whereas Eusebius had written in a mood of understandable euphoria, Augustine had to explain why God's providence had allowed the Christian empire to experience such an event as the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410. Against Eusebius, he held that Christians could not expect happiness on earth, for the present was still a time of trial; nor was the Roman empire essentially different from other empires. Whereas Eusebius had written as an eastern churchman steeped in the thought of Origen, the *City of God* is the work of an extraordinary individual in the western, Latin tradition, a former rhetor converted to philosophy, thence to be cast in the mould of a bishop. It takes the form of a sustained historical argument about the nature of Roman civilization and the Roman past, and of a confrontation between the classic works of Latin literature and Christian culture. The themes of historical time, classical versus Christian culture, political theory and the nature of Christian providence intertwine through the twenty-two books, in comparison with which Orosius' *Historia Adversus Paganos* (A.D. 417–18), composed to answer essentially the same question, pales into insignificance.¹⁰⁰

VII. HIGH LITERARY CULTURE

The fourth century was a time of vivid juxtapositions. The urban culture which supported rhetorical education and now gave a place to Christian oratory also provided the stimulus, especially from the later fourth century onwards, for a revival of composition in verse. L. Robert drew attention to the amazingly rich collection of Greek verse epigrams inscribed from the fourth to the sixth centuries in honour of officials or civic occasions, which show a technical expertise and a vocabulary indicative of the widespread existence of training and patronage.¹⁰¹ But the phenomenon was not confined to Greek – pope Damasus (366–84) was only one of the many who composed Latin epigrams. Again, subjects, styles and types of verse composition ranged from the most classical to the most Christian. Almost all took as their starting-point the aim of *imitatio*, adopting, and in the

⁹⁹ The earlier part of Eusebius' very large output as scholar and apologist, including the *Ecclesiastical History*, falls before the period covered by this volume; Barnes, *CE*, chs. 6–10, provides a comprehensive discussion.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *Augustine* is still the starting-point for the study of Augustine; that of Chadwick (1986) stands out among recent short introductions. ¹⁰¹ Robert, *Hellenica* iv.

process also adapting, earlier models. Among the Latin poets of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, Ausonius and Claudian dominate the field in the sheer volume and technical accomplishment of their verse. The former produced over a long career an extraordinarily large and varied output, ranging from poems dealing with events or people in his personal life, longer descriptive poems on themes such as the river Moselle, the subject of his famous *Mosella*, and *jeux d'esprit* or, perhaps rather, technical exercises, which tackle such unpromising material as the names of Roman emperors or the signs of the zodiac, and put it into difficult forms; the so-called *Technopaegnion* consists of sets of hexameters in which every line ends with a monosyllable. Decoration and technical display were highly valued in late Latin poetry; poets demonstrated their skill in vivid description and in the *variatio* with which they treated familiar subjects and rhetorical tropes.¹⁰² Some of Ausonius' epigrams incorporate Greek words and phrases or are versions of Greek originals, while his *Cento Nuptialis* is an epithalamium in the form of a compilation of Virgilian lines and half-lines; the prose preface explains its origin in the fact that the emperor Valentinian had engaged in just such a *tour de force* and then invited competition. The poem ends with a graphic description of sexual intercourse ingeniously put together from Virgilian phrases whose original application was totally different. Fifty years before, Porphyrius Optatianus had composed Christian poems in acrostics, addressed to Constantine. Such bravura displays were highly valued in some fourth-century circles; modern readers less attuned to their like may feel more drawn to Ausonius' poems about his family or those in various different metres about his fellow rhetors and *grammatici* from Bordeaux (see pp. 673–4 above). These have something of the ring of personal feeling, and are full of fascinating information about individuals and about the social and educational context of the region. Their personal, and even domestic, tone is unusual in contemporary learned literature, though we can also find it in Gregory of Nazianzus' epigrams about his mother, or in the autobiographical parts of Augustine's *Confessions*.

The poems of Claudian, long hexameter compositions on political themes, mostly written from a strongly partisan viewpoint,¹⁰³ are also highly formal and accomplished, using all the devices of rhetoric and most of the paraphernalia of classical Latin epic. Claudian seems also to have been the author of a short Christian poem *De Salvatore*, but if so, his Christianity is kept firmly to one side in his public poems, which are full of pagan gods, goddesses and personifications. Claudian was a master of invective as well as of praise: the explicitness of his attacks on the eastern

¹⁰² Roberts (1989) ch. 2; Roberts attempts to link literary technique with the techniques of contemporary visual art, *ibid.*, ch. 3; see also Mathews (1993) ch. 6, with *Corippus, In laudem Iustini*, ed. Cameron, Averil, London, 1976: 119, 141 (processional and axial schemes).

¹⁰³ Cameron, Alan, *Claudian*.

ministers Rufinus and Eutropius would shock a modern critic, though their satirical bite is equalled by Jerome. But if Claudian's skill lies less in innovation than in his mastery of rhetorical technique and versification, other Latin poets were more willing to experiment. Prudentius' *Peristephanon* is a collection of Latin poems in lyric metres about Roman and Spanish martyrs (he was himself a Spaniard), with their gruesome ordeals described in loving detail. Building on classical models, Prudentius attempted to carve out a new form, in both subject matter and treatment. His verse preface records the preferment he received from the emperor Theodosius I, who was also from Spain.¹⁰⁴ But he uses his art to dwell lingeringly on the burning of the virgin martyr Eulalia and similarly prurient topics. Prudentius was a prolific and varied poet, in whom we can see a sustained effort to apply the diction and metres of Latin poetry to Christian subject matter: he also wrote a book of daily prayers and hymns in lyric metres (*Cathemerinon*), two long hexameter poems with iambic prefaces on doctrinal matters (the *Apotheosis*, against heresy, and the *Hamartigena*, on the origins of sin), an allegorical epic (the *Psychomachia*) and the *Contra Symmachum*, two books of hexameters in which he dramatized the conflict which had taken place nearly two decades previously, in 384, over the imperial removal of the altar of Victory from the senate house. Elaborate and allusive, the poem praises the victory of Stilicho and Honorius over Alaric and the Visigoths at Pollentia (A.D. 402), and rebuts the pagan claim that Roman military defeats were the result of abandoning the gods. The argument, cast in the form of a confrontation between the pagan Symmachus and Arcadius and Honorius, the sons of Theodosius I, is followed by a long and emotional speech addressed to the emperors by the personified Rome: 'Do not, I beg, be swayed by the voice of the great orator [Symmachus], who . . . bemoans the death of his rites and with the weapons of his intellect and the powers of his eloquence dares, alas, to attack our faith.'¹⁰⁵ But Christian Latin poetry was not confined to heroic compositions like these. There were also more practical needs, including pastoral ones: Ambrose, a fine poet himself, is said to have introduced hymn-singing at Milan in the 380s, and Prudentius' hymns may also have been written with performance in mind. Like Damasus, Ambrose composed epigrams to be inscribed in churches; and Paulinus of Nola, a former pupil of Ausonius at Bordeaux and later governor of Campania, experimented with the combination of scriptural, Virgilian and Horatian elements in a series of poems ranging from occasional poetry based on classical types such as the *consolatio*, the *propemptikon* or the epithalamium to a set of poems celebrating the feast-day of Felix of Nola, in whose honour Paulinus and his wife Therasia

¹⁰⁴ *Peristeph., praef.* 16–21; see Palmer (1989) 24–8.

¹⁰⁵ *C. Symm.* 11.761–4; the allusiveness of the poem itself makes the historicity of the alleged embassy by Symmachus controversial: see e.g. Cameron, Alan, *Claudian* 240–1; Barnes (1976).

erected an elaborate and ambitious complex of buildings.¹⁰⁶ To some extent, as in the case of the Christian letters of this period (a large collection of Paulinus' letters survives), the writing of Christian poetry in Latin was linked with patronage and *amicitia*, and with the demands of court or upper-class life. But it might also reflect the growing needs of cult or liturgy, and here its development paralleled that of Christian art and, even more important, church-building.

The phenomenon of verse composition itself was in fact empire-wide, and very varied. The learned empress Eudocia composed an epic on her husband Theodosius II's Persian wars (she later wrote biblical paraphrases in Greek verse, and rather bad verses on a set of baths which she restored in the Holy Land). Gregory of Nazianzus adapted the Greek epigram for Christian purposes with a series of long and interesting poems in which he wrote about his mother Nonna and about his own life; and the caustic pagan epigrams by the fourth-century poet Palladas of Alexandria were already anthologized and known in the west.¹⁰⁷ Dedicatory inscriptions in Greek verse are a striking feature of eastern cities in the fourth to sixth centuries, and suitable inscriptions were also needed to fulfil the growing requirements of church-building and Christian patronage. A stylized vocabulary soon developed both for honorific inscriptions on officials and for Christian dedications; but some at least of these hired poets also had literary pretensions. They wrote, in any case, in the context of as vigorous a background of verse composition as existed in the Latin west. 'Wandering poets', especially from Egypt, who lived on their literary skill to travel and gain advancement, are a phenomenon of the fifth-century east,¹⁰⁸ but there were already poet-grammarians or poet-rhetors from Egypt in the fourth century, such as Harpocration, who became a teacher in Antioch, apparently with Libanius, and was then invited to Constantinople by Themistius as a sophist; his fellow Egyptian, Eudaimon, followed a similar path at least as far as Antioch, and there was also a probably different Harpocration who is named in a papyrus as a panegyrist from Panopolis in the fourth century.¹⁰⁹ Greek acrostics revealing the name Magnus may be the work of a doctor, Magnus of Nisibis, who practised in Alexandria and is the subject of an epitaph by Palladas.¹¹⁰ Eunapius' remark that Egyptians were mad on poetry¹¹¹ seems to have been justified. There was also a strong connection between Greek poetry and late paganism. The poets Helladius and Ammonius of Alexandria, both pagan priests, prudently left Alexandria for Constantinople at the time of the destruction of the Serapeum there in 391, setting up schools in the capital.

¹⁰⁶ Paulinus' poetry: Roberts (1989) 133–8. ¹⁰⁷ See Cameron, Alan (1993) 80f., 90f.

¹⁰⁸ Cameron, Alan (1965); the library at Panopolis: *Egypt* 103–4.

¹⁰⁹ For their careers, and for a prosopography of late antique grammarians and others, see Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, Part II, with nos. 210 and 226. ¹¹⁰ West (1982). ¹¹¹ *V. Soph.* 493.

Earlier, the emperor Julian had composed Greek hymns to Helios and Cybele,¹¹² just as he had shown interest while on his Persian expedition in the eastern towns that were still centres of paganism – Beroea, Batnae, Hierapolis and Harran (Carrhae), home of the cult of the moon.¹¹³ Behind much of this exoticism lay the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which were much in vogue in Julian's Neoplatonic circles (see p. 680 above) and were a strong influence on the Christian but platonizing hymns of Synesius and, later, one of the two favourite books of Proclus.¹¹⁴ Allusive and learned, imbued with the vocabulary of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Synesius' hymns have led several scholars into the trap of taking them as a guide to 'pagan' and 'Christian' phases in his life – yet another example of the danger of reading off the character of the author from a literary composition. They represent rather, as so often, the interconnectedness of the various cultural strands in the period. The so-called Orphic hymns were a further important source for pagans, and in the fourth and fifth centuries Neoplatonists, like Christians, made use of prayers and hymns, as their philosophy acquired all the hallmarks of a religious system. Hymns were not the unique preserve either of Christians or of pagans.

Both this material and its authors clearly belong in a learned context. The Egyptian poets are frequently also grammarians, and amateurs like the empress Eudocia liked to pride themselves on their erudition. As for Latin literary culture, Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, with its *Dream of Scipio* consciously evoking Cicero's *De Republica*, and Servius' great commentary on Virgil belong to the early fifth century, but in the last decades of the fourth century, too, members of the senatorial élite in Rome showed their concern for traditional literary culture, in recopying texts of classical authors (and appending *subscriptions* to record what had been done and by whom), reviving the works of neglected Silver Latin writers such as Juvenal, and translating Greek works (though they tended to choose abstruse works of limited interest). It is striking to find Christians as much involved in this activity as pagans.¹¹⁵ Even overtly anti-pagan literary works by Christians, such as Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*, the *Carmen ad Senatorem*, or the mysterious *Carmen contra Paganos*, presented Christianity in Virgilian guise, and even as its members were becoming Christian, the educated élite belied Ammianus' scathing jibes¹¹⁶ by making its love and knowledge of the classics an important element in its self-identity. A rare contender in the category of pagan propaganda against Christians may have been the translation

¹¹² The cult of the latter, which could be given a cosmic interpretation, was a favourite in late Greek paganism, and achieved a fashionable following also among Roman pagans: consequently it also occupied a central place in Christian polemic.

¹¹³ *Ep.* 98 Bidez (to Libanius); *Amm. Marc.* xxiii.3.2–3; xxv.3.20; xxvi.6.2–3; *Zos.* iv.4.2.

¹¹⁴ *Marin. V. Procl.* 38; the other was Plato's *Timaeus*. Synesius' hymns: Cameron and Long, *Barbarians and Politics* 28–35, against Terzaghi.

¹¹⁵ Cameron, Alan, 'Latin revival'; *subscriptions*: Zetzel (1981) 211–31.

¹¹⁶ xxviii.4, cf. xiv.6.

of the already contentious *Life* of the pagan wonder-worker Apollonius of Tyana by Nicomachus Flavianus,¹¹⁷ but Symmachus' famous appeal for religious toleration in his third *Relatio* may have been more typical of the pagan stance in the face of authoritarian Christian emperors.

VIII. EPISTOLOGRAPHY AND LITERARY NETWORKS

The late fourth century is remarkable for the intensity of literary and intellectual activity among certain members of the upper class, both Christian and pagan; for the sheer volume of surviving works, this is surely the richest period of antiquity. Moreover, while a considerable amount of material comes, as we have seen, from late-fourth-century Rome, literary activity was extraordinarily widely distributed geographically, from Mesopotamia in the east, to Cappadocia and Pontus, Jerome's retreat at Bethlehem, Antioch and Constantinople, Rome and Milan, Alexandria and Upper Egypt, from Cyrenaica and Hippo in North Africa to Gaul and Spain in the west. Contemporary sources are full of references to travel, despite the warfare and invasion that was also a feature of the period. Even given the extreme slowness and uncertainty of delivery by modern standards,¹¹⁸ enough letters survive to make this also one of the major periods for ancient epistolography. The letters written by the great Christian writers such as Ambrose, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Paulinus and Augustine tend to dominate modern consciousness, but letter-writing was shared by pagans and Christians alike. Most of these letters are hard for modern taste to digest, for the demands of rhetoric and genre almost invariably take precedence over moments of personal revelation. From Q. Aurelius Symmachus nine hundred letters survive, covering the period from the 360s to A.D. 402. In Greek, Libanius has left a collection no less voluminous – over fifteen hundred, many of which are the letters of recommendation on which the organization of the late Roman bureaucracy depended. Significantly, the correspondence of Pliny the Younger was read again in this period, giving rise to an admiring comparison between Symmachus and Pliny. Less by direct statement than by their style and subject matter, Symmachus' letters express the forms and manners of senatorial and upper-class life in the late fourth century. They were well received and appreciated in his own day, even allowing for an element of natural as well as literary exaggeration in his own claims,¹¹⁹ and are a primary resource for social, cultural and administrative history; like the letters of Libanius, if in the context of Rome rather than of the Greek east, they also show the

¹¹⁷ For which see Sidon. *Ep.* viii.3.1. Flavianus himself seems to have been somewhat exceptional in this regard; his son, a Christian, copied the text of Livy.

¹¹⁸ Cf. also the frequent references in the sources to letter-carriers, e.g. *V. Ant.*, pref.

¹¹⁹ *Ep.* iv.34.64; v.85–6; ii.12.48.

functioning of rhetoric as a badge of cultural belonging. Symmachus was of course a pagan, the champion of the pagan senators in the face of the mounting influence of Ambrose and an increasingly aggressive imperial policy towards pagans, but just as there were Christians among Libanius' pupils, so there were Christians among the correspondents of Symmachus, to whom he wrote without evident awkwardness.

It is hardly surprising if Christian and pagan epistolography followed a similar pattern, with an emphasis on letters of recommendation, consolation and encouragement, in accordance with the demands of late Roman *amicitia*. Augustine's circle at the time of his conversion in 386 comprised men not unlike himself, with official positions as provincial governors, lawyers and the like. They often had provincial origins, and were the more dependent for that reason on networks of patronage and social contact. But the Pauline Epistles were also an influence on Christian epistolography, and these too were read and commented upon in the late-fourth-century west; many Christian letters deal with spiritual matters and contain passages of scriptural exegesis. One of the most important exponents of this genre, Paulinus of Nola, came of a landowning family in Aquitaine and was the son of a senator; he well illustrates the ambiguities of late-fourth-century culture, for though he was famous for his renunciation of wealth and his dedication to the ascetic life at Nola, he continued to express himself not only in his highly cultured poems built on classical models, but also in a long series of letters, of which forty-five survive, in which rhetoric and tradition compete with practical, moral and religious content. Paulinus' letters reached correspondents from Gaul to Palestine, including Jerome, Rufinus, Augustine and Pelagius, as well as less well-known bishops, clergy and laymen; a large group was addressed to his friend Sulpicius Severus, a lawyer who adopted a life of literary activity (as the author of the *Life* of Martin of Tours: see p. 699 below) and religious patronage closely comparable to Paulinus' own. Paulinus' friends and contacts included many who like himself belonged to the circles of Jerome and Augustine, such as Melania the Younger. As in the case of his poetry, his letters combine the traditional themes of classical *amicitia* with the newer and evolving Christian patronage. But the Christian letter was by no means as limited as this might suggest. Many of Jerome's letters, in sharp contrast to Paulinus', amount to bravura displays of satirical writing, like the notorious *Ep.* 22, in which he urges Eustochium, the daughter of his friend Paula, to a life of virginity; among other lapses of taste, her mother is congratulated on the prospect of becoming the mother-in-law of Christ. Often, as here, Jerome's letters amount to miniature treatises, like *Ep.* 78, in which he instructs Paula on the meaning of the forty-two stages on the journey of the Israelites from Egypt (Num. 33), or lays down his usually severe instructions for Christian behaviour in answer to unwary friends and

acquaintances who had consulted him, as with Furia, a widow sternly warned against remarriage (*Ep.* 54). But it is also because of these letters, and others written by his contemporaries, that it is possible to construct so detailed a picture of personal contacts between certain groups in this period.¹²⁰ Jerome was quite unique. Furthermore, he was a great satirist and literary stylist; even the letters advocating humility and renunciation are written in the most sparkling and elegant Latin. A series of hitherto unknown letters from Augustine was recently discovered by J. Divjak, in addition to the more than two hundred already known; they have added a new dimension to the understanding of Augustine's thinking on sexuality, but are perhaps even more important for the light they shed on practical matters – clerical appointments and slave trading among them. The revival of epistolography was destined to continue with the many letters written in ecclesiastical circles in fifth-century Gaul, and the turgid but important *Variae* written in sixth-century Italy by Cassiodorus for Theodoric.¹²¹

IX. CHRISTIAN WRITING

As we have seen, Christians patronized the same schools and teachers as pagans. Nevertheless, Christians also had access to a different heritage. Roman ladies like the two Melanias and Paula read the scriptures, especially the Psalms, the Hebrew Bible, the works of Origen in the recent translations by Rufinus, and the writings of Plotinus. A few women, like Stilicho's daughter Maria¹²² and evidently also Proba, author of a Virgilian cento (see p. 702 below), were well-read in the classical poets, or in philosophy, like Hypatia, but these tended to have family support or intellectual leanings. Their brothers and husbands, often converted at a mature age, and with the full benefit of secular education, were likely to have had a more extensive earlier experience of reading classical authors, as was the case with Marius Victorinus, who turned from commenting on Cicero's rhetorical works and translating Porphyry and Plotinus to writing commentaries on the Pauline Epistles. An earlier example is that of the astrologer Firmicus Maternus, who, having composed a treatise on astrology (the *Mathesis*) in A.D. 337, then wrote an attack on paganism.¹²³ But some Christians with a high degree of secular culture were also receptive to works of a quite different sort. The *Life of Antony* made a great impression even in professional western circles (see p. 669 above). We have seen how Christians themselves engaged in an energetic project of adapting themselves to the public environment of high culture, matching an acceptable public speech to their new political persona; something similar happened in the literary sphere.

¹²⁰ For a network analysis see Clark (1992) ch. 1.

¹²¹ See in general, Garzya (1983); letters of Ausonius: Green (1980).

¹²² Claudian, *Carm.* x.229–37. ¹²³ A.D. 343: see Barnes (1991) 346–7.

These were important and well-connected people, often with public positions and networks of contacts. But contemporary Christianity also had a strongly didactic tone, conveyed not only by theological treatises and exegesis, but more directly by oral forms of teaching, such as homilies and scriptural readings. Some homilies, preserved in literary form, offer a highly sophisticated mixture of the theological and the rhetorical, and reflect the interplay of the requirements of the liturgy and the needs of the worshipping congregation: such are, for example, the Easter homilies of Gregory of Nyssa. Homiletics developed alongside and was shaped by the establishment of a regular calendar of liturgical celebration, of which Easter was the high point. In addition, candidates for baptism received catechetical instruction. The surviving catechetical orations of Cyril of Jerusalem (consecrated A.D. 350) are perhaps untypical of the genre; they consist of a set of eighteen pre-baptismal lectures on the Christian faith, which would have been delivered during Lent, a stiff course indeed for the catechumens. The lectures presume an intelligent audience capable of appreciating a relatively sophisticated argument in Greek; they can hardly be a guide to the type of instruction received by the average Christian in a lesser place. The five *Mystagogical Catecheses* which follow (perhaps attributable to Cyril's successor) constitute an important exposition of the meaning of the liturgy, and at the same time an important source of information. Cyril was no ordinary bishop, and the liturgy of Jerusalem in the fourth century, described also by the pilgrim Egeria in the diary of her travels (A.D. 384), was naturally exceptional. Nevertheless, as churches and monasteries were built in more and more places, the cultural apparatus of Christianity also obtruded itself into the consciousness of pagans. For converts, fourth-century church membership was a community affair and congregations were exposed to regular moral and spiritual instruction; whatever their individual reasons for conversion, this was an audience whose needs had to be met.

X. BIOGRAPHY, CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN

Christianity benefited from, and contributed to, a growing focus on the individual. This found some expression in the new genre of hagiography; the *Life of Antony* belongs to the mid fourth century, and by the first half of the fifth century the type was well established, with such works as Jerome's *Lives of the Hermits*, written in emulation of the *Life of Antony*, the *Life of Macrina* by Gregory of Nyssa (early 380s), the *Life of Martin* by Sulpicius Severus, those of Melania the Younger (before A.D. 451) and John Chrysostom, and *Lives* of Ambrose, Augustine and others. The degree of realistic detail in such works varies greatly: recent scholarship demonstrates not only their ideological and exemplary aspects but also the complexity of their writing

practice. Christians also wrote about scriptural characters, as in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*, or John Chrysostom's *Life of Paul*; there are also biographical features in works such as Gregory of Nazianzus' *encomium* on Athanasius, and an attention to family affection in Gregory's orations on his father, his brother Basil, his brother Caesarius and his sister Gorgonia. Different types of biographical material were also incorporated into other Christian works – for instance, the idealized account of Origen in book vi of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* or the biography of Alypius in Augustine's *Confessions* vi. The *Confessions* itself combines a detailed account of Augustine's early life that is fascinating and unique in its psychological realism¹²⁴ with philosophical discussion of memory, time and creation. The more literary of the ascetic lives bear a considerable resemblance to the contemporary *lives* written by pagans about philosophers and 'sophists' (teachers and intellectuals), also presented as larger-than-life models, and praised for their conquest of human weakness and refusal of luxury. Their subjects include sages from the distant or more recent past, such as the lives of Pythagoras by Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus, and Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, as well as those of contemporary pagans, as in Eunapius' *Lives of the Sophists* (see p. 681 above). Nicomachus Flavianus' Latin translation of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* falls into this category, and the lives of Neoplatonist sages were to be continued in the late fifth and sixth centuries in the lives of the philosophers Proclus and Isidore by Marinus of Neapolis and Damascius respectively, with their Christian counterpart, the *Life of Severus* by Zachariah of Mytilene.

XI. ASCETIC LITERATURE

But the later fourth century, and especially the fifth, also saw the prominence of the 'holy man' as a social phenomenon and exemplar, and this too is reflected in the literature of the period. Alongside these more literary works there developed a quite different sort of biographical narrative, including the collection of 'lives' of the desert fathers, built from oral material and written down over a long process of redaction. Already in the early fifth century the *Historia Monachorum*, a Latin version of the Greek original by Rufinus of Aquileia, and Palladius' *Lausiac History* testify to the existence of a luxuriant mass of stories and 'sayings'. If the *Life of Antony* was a seminal work, it belonged nevertheless in a context against which it can at least partly be explained. *Lives* of Pachomius, the other great father of Egyptian monasticism (d. 346/7), were written soon after his death, in Greek and in several Coptic versions.¹²⁵ Fifth-century Syria produced a

¹²⁴ For an illuminating brief discussion of its 'biographical' aspects see Clark (1993) ch. 2.

¹²⁵ On Greek and Coptic in fourth-century Egypt, see the corrective to previous views in Bagnall, *Egypt* 235–55.

further example in Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa*, a collection of accounts of holy men (and some women) whom Theodoret had himself encountered as bishop of Cyrrhus.

A dense and complex ascetic literature, ranging from the more or less popular to the highly rhetorical, thus developed in the eastern empire from the fourth century onwards, and quickly spread to the west. Here especially we encounter the mixture of styles and literary levels, and the 'shock of the new' experienced by some traditionally educated converts, like Augustine's friends, on encountering the ideas contained in a work like the *Life of Antony*. Rufinus and Palladius, like Theodoret, were highly educated enthusiasts who made stories of monks and ascetics available to their own circles; indeed, it was difficult to restrain the eagerness of aristocratic parties of clerics and ladies who travelled as religious tourists to see the fathers of the Egyptian desert. Ascetic literature also took more didactic forms – for instance, in the treatises on virginity by authors such as Gregory of Nyssa, or in the late-fourth-century writings of Evagrius Ponticus or the so-called 'Macarian' homilies (written in Greek, and attached to the name of Macarius of Egypt, though in fact reflecting a Syrian background). There were many degrees and shades of asceticism; nor was the desert by any means as much populated by simple uneducated monks as some of the surviving 'sayings' like to suggest. Evagrius of Pontus (d. 399) had been ordained in Constantinople by Gregory of Nazianzus and spent time in Jerusalem before going to live at Nitria. The desert fathers were deeply divided on doctrinal matters, and Evagrius was later condemned for his Origenism; yet his voluminous ascetic writings were enormously influential, both in the west, through the intermediary of John Cassian's Latin *Conferences*,¹²⁶ and in the east in the continuous tradition of orthodox monastic spirituality. Evagrius' writings established a typology and a vocabulary of ascetic psychology and spiritual progress: key terms are *logismoi* (evil thoughts, temptation) and *apatheia* (absence of passion, ascetic control). Similar, though less formalized, ideas found expression in all sorts of writing, especially from the late fourth century onwards; the very range of ascetic literature and hagiography is enormous, even in the fourth century, from the highly literary, with strong influences from classical rhetoric, to the semi-popular, the oral and apocryphal.¹²⁷ New martyrologies of earlier (often legendary) martyrs were soon joined, especially from the fifth century, by appropriate narratives about the saints whose cult centres were now developing. Three fifth-century *Lives*, two Greek, one

¹²⁶ The impact of eastern ascetic thought and writing on the west is one of the most important themes of the fifth century: see Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity* 163–7; 181–97. Markus, whose focus is on the west, stresses asceticism as producing a closing in of horizons, against the view presented here.

¹²⁷ For the difficulties inherent in the term 'popular', and for the interplay of oral and literary, see Cameron, Averil, *Rhetoric of Empire*, especially ch. 3. For asceticism see also ch. 20 above.

Syriac, survive of Symeon the Stylite (d. 459), whose great shrine was at Qal'at Siman, between Antioch and Aleppo, and a further example is the anonymous Greek *Life and Miracles of Thecla*,¹²⁸ the wholly fictional but highly popular virginal saint made famous by the late-second-century *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and featuring in such learned fourth-century texts as the *Symposium* of Methodius (d. 312) and the *Life of Macrina* by Gregory of Nyssa; her cult centred on her great shrine at Seleucia in Isauria, visited by Egeria on her journeyings in the east in 384.

Christian literature in late antiquity allowed more space to women – as subjects, even if not as authors. Macrina, Gorgonia and Gregory Nazianzen's mother Nonna are balanced in the west by the two Melanias, the Elder and the Younger, as the subjects of Christian writing, and some 'desert mothers' can be found in the monastic literature; Therasia, the wife of Paulinus, and Augustine's mother Monica are known to us, at least indirectly, as are Jerome's friends Marcella, Paula and the rest, and Olympias, the loyal friend of John Chrysostom. Writings by women themselves are, however, few.¹²⁹ One of the best-known is the vivid and highly personal diary which the western pilgrim Egeria wrote about her experiences while visiting the Christian holy places in the east in the early 380s; it records real life in the late fourth century, unencumbered by literary considerations. Egeria was writing to instruct, and in most cases the writing of lives also aimed at providing models for emulation. These works were not just 'literature': they were presented as explicit teaching-aids, providing ideals of behaviour for contemporary Christians to follow. This is why John Chrysostom advocated the reading of the *Life of Antony*, and why that and similar works had such a strong effect. Christian biography was not a matter of psychological analysis or even realistic detail, but of models and types. Eusebius saw in Constantine's banquet for the bishops a type of Christ in heaven with the apostles¹³⁰ and Moses as a type for Constantine. Similarly, the subjects of Christian biography, literary or not, were simultaneously types for the average Christian to follow and types of Christ.

XII. THEOLOGICAL WORKS

An enormous number of technical works of theology survive from the period – doctrinal treatises such as Athanasius' *De Incarnatione*, Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium* or *De Virginitate*, commentaries on the scriptures,

¹²⁸ Above, ch. 21, p. 633.

¹²⁹ 'Proba' is also said by Isidore of Seville to have written in addition to her cento on the life of Jesus a poem on war dealing with the rebellion of Magnentius against Constantius II; the date is debated, but the attempt by Shanzer (1986) to identify the poet as the wife of the cos. of A.D. 371 rather than as Faltitia Betitia Proba, wife of the *praef. urb.* of A.D. 351 has not found favour (see Barnes (1991) 350–1). ¹³⁰ *V. Const.* III.15.

polemical treatises, sermons, letters. Traditionally, they have been thought to fall outside the realm of literature. Yet they too have a claim to be included in any study of late antique culture. Even when they seem to show few direct traces of secular rhetoric, as is the case, for instance, with Athanasius, these works not only have a power and vigour of their own, but also mark the evolution of a distinct categorization of knowledge. In this process, it is difficult to separate the thought from its verbal expression. Many patristic works in both Latin and Greek draw heavily on the long tradition of expressing Christian thought in terms of Platonic vocabulary and categories; this, together with the widespread influence of philosophy noted above, led to the gradual development of a genuinely Christian philosophy, a process in which Augustine led the way.¹³¹

Taken as a group, the theological writings of the period have a major cognitive importance; they represent a sustained series of attempts to reclassify human and divine knowledge within clear and authoritative categories which will correspond to the increasing social and institutional power of the church. In all their variety of forms, the theological writings constitute a major attempt to reformulate and control human knowledge; their subject matter embraces the nature of God and the nature of man, cosmology and morals. The process of classification and categorization had profound social and intellectual implications; this was the period when the foundations both of medieval and of Byzantine theology were laid down, and when the implications of Christianity as a dominant state religion were first felt. To a considerable degree this was achieved by defining deviance – what orthodox Christianity was not to be – a process to which the *Panarion* of Epiphanius, half fantasy, half demonology, gave a powerful impetus. An intellectual apparatus would be required for times of need. We can perhaps see this period still as one of competition and fluidity, but bishops would soon find it useful, especially from the time of the council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), to have to hand collections of quotations (*florilegia*) designed to prove a particular case.¹³² The process of definition was to go on for centuries. But at least some part of this body of knowledge and, even more important, of this way of thinking was gradually percolating into the general consciousness.

The reception of such ideas does not have to be ascribed only to reading by the general public of literary or theological works whose actual circulation will no doubt have been very limited. Their authors were often leading and active churchmen, whose ideas had a direct oral impact; an individual writer often wrote many different kinds of work, and thus had multiple ways of transmitting ideas; the writers were often known to or connected

¹³¹ This, not literary culture, is the theme of Pelikan (1993), which focuses on the Cappadocians.

¹³² See above, ch. 19.

with each other, and did not write in isolation; finally, the content of such writing found its way into sermons orally delivered, had practical import through the results of church councils, and found expression in visual art.¹³³ Looking at the characteristic metaphors, types of argument and themes of this vast mass of literature is an essential step to understanding the process of contemporary cultural change. That so many highly trained individuals in this period chose to devote themselves to this kind of composition rather than to stay within the bounds of traditional secular culture is indicative in itself of the cultural changes that were taking place. Indeed, the internal conflicts within the church thus emerge as one of the most powerful stimulants to literary production in the period.

XIII. CONCLUSION

The term 'literary culture' begs many questions. In particular, it conceals the actual significance during this period of oral communication (I leave visual art for the relevant chapter (pp. 736–61 below), though the same argument holds good there, too). Late antique towns were theatrical places, and churches soon began to compete for the crowds, as preachers railed against the competition from theatres, spectacles and baths. The manner and style of traditional rhetoric were still part of urban life, just as they were part of the law and of all dealings with the administration. The rise to public prominence after Constantine of great Christian orators like Gregory of Nazianzus and preachers like John Chrysostom or Ambrose introduced a different repertoire of images and a different set of assumptions; but they were all the more effective in that they drew on familiar technical models in order to put them across. Preaching is the hidden iceberg of Christian culture in this period. It reached the classes untouched by classical literary culture, until, as an increasing number of members of the traditional literary élite, such as Augustine and his circle, the Cappadocians or Paulinus of Nola, turned their energies away from their own intellectual background, the mental models and categories of society began to change with them. While John Chrysostom was perhaps the most brilliant preacher, as befitted his prominent position in both Antioch and Constantinople, Augustine was the most acutely aware of what preaching implied, and of the mental reversal it might bring. His techniques were carefully thought out, and built on careful consideration of how to fit Ciceronian precepts to Christian needs. He was deeply conscious of the different rhetorical strengths of the scriptures, and the *De Doctrina Christiana* contains an admiring rhetorical analysis of the famous passage in 2 Corinthians 11 where St Paul defends himself against his critics;¹³⁴ like

¹³³ See Cameron, Averil (1997a).

¹³⁴ *De Doctr. Christ.* IV.13.

Paul, Augustine well understood that the 'foolishness' in the eyes of men could in its reversal of convention be a source of power. The cumulative message of all these sermons, sometimes taken down by stenographers for later circulation, purveyed a powerful image: the conventional assumptions, the cultural models on which contemporary life was based, were to be turned inside out in favour of 'a new song'. 'In order to learn what the new song is we must first learn what the new life is';¹³⁵ old systems of understanding were to be replaced by new ones.

Because of the nature of the evidence, we have little or no access for this period to the habitual metaphors and patterns of speech which can chart the course of change in other societies, but we do have an enormous amount of literary material. It is true that by far the greater part comes from a limited social class, and is imbued by the traditional norms of formal rhetoric. However, two facts stand out: first, the sheer quantity of the literary material, not to mention the amount of oratory and preaching which has left no written trace, and second, the strong impression, even within the limits of the surviving material, of variety, conflict and cultural change. Previous discussions of Christianity and classical culture have focused mainly on the formal literary elements, especially genre development and the Christian use or rejection of classical models. The relation of Christian and pagan literature has too often been presented in terms of an assumed 'conflict', when appropriation and assimilation provide better tools of analysis. But just as ancient historians are becoming accustomed to giving importance to the power of images from visual art, so it is opportune now to extend that approach to the role played by literature, cognitive processes and communication in bringing about cultural change.

This survey may appropriately conclude, therefore, by suggesting some ways forward along these lines. The literature of late antiquity shows, on the one hand, a strong sense of continuity with the past, yet it gives on the other hand a powerful impression of change. New metaphors, different explanatory systems and different cultural models were being disseminated – an uncomfortable process at any time, and one that gives rise to uneasy and contradictory responses from contemporaries. The change is obviously related to, but not by any means coterminous with, Christianization. In order to appreciate it better, and to read late antique literature both as a cultural product and an indicator, we would do well to look at such issues as audience and reception, prevailing images or metaphors, the texture of language (not easy, in view of the nature of the available evidence), the preferred explanatory systems and the relation (not necessarily the difference) between popular and educated beliefs and their expression.

One illustration may be enough to indicate the richness of the potential

¹³⁵ Aug. *Serm.* 34.1.

field for this sort of enquiry. It has long been traditional to present this period in terms of a supposedly growing irrationality, which is linked in turn to an increased religiosity or, to put it more bluntly, superstition. How to avoid these rationalist assumptions? Elusive concepts like irrationality, or even 'spirituality', rest not only on enlightenment rationalism, but also on a particular conception of religion. Yet much of the Christian theological literature of the period was in fact aimed less at changing the consciousness of spirituality than at changing existing patterns of thought. Throughout this period and later, Christian writers composed treatises attacking astrology and fate; it was a theme especially liable to crop up in the many commentaries on the creation accounts in the book of Genesis, like Basil's *Hexaemeron* (commentary on the account of the six days of creation), where he argues against the notion that the heavenly bodies could have any power of their own. The targets of these Christian attacks included both pagan philosophical systems and popular belief; their agenda was to change the prevailing, and strongly held, explanatory system in a very thoroughgoing way. At least in the popular sphere, their arguments and strictures probably had little effect: belief in astrology was still a major concern for the church in the seventh century, and indeed probably at all periods.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, this example allows us to see theological writing in cognitive terms as an 'expert system'; even if its precepts were not readily accepted (and they too took various forms), it represented a major attempt to replace prevailing cultural assumptions. In its many varied forms, so did the whole spread of Christian writing.

Two further questions suggest themselves: first, why did classical models continue to be so dominant, and second, what were the cultural implications of this dominance? Given the conservative nature of imperial literary culture in general, the first can be answered simply: *imitatio*, a central principle in classical literature since Hellenistic times, had been greatly reinforced by the Second Sophistic movement, and short of a fundamental change in the educational system itself it was bound to remain so, as indeed it did right through the Byzantine period. It is not the practice of *imitatio* but the deviation from it that has to be explained. The second question is more difficult. Not only does it take us back to the issues of the overlap between what is classical and what is pagan and the inherent élitism of classicizing literature, but it also implies a limitation of subject matter; one could not easily write in classicizing style about subjects outside the repertoire of Virgil or the other great writers, as is shown by the contortions to which some Christian writers were prepared to go in their efforts to fit Christian subject matter into classical moulds. Moreover, while the technical requirements of composition remained so high, the majority of the

¹³⁶ See Amand (1945).

population was excluded from literary activity, either as writers or as audience; thus literary expertise, even of a superficial kind, itself constituted a desirable social commodity. A widening of the range would have meant dilution, and there are no signs that any attempts were made in this direction outside Christian circles; on the contrary, as the traditional culture became more difficult to obtain, especially in provinces infiltrated by barbarians, the value attached to technical skill and the degree of actual preciousity correspondingly rose. This apparent preference of form over content has led in the past to a general disparagement of late Roman – not to speak of Byzantine – literature. The same attitude (deep-rooted in our own cultural assumptions) leads to an underestimation of the volume of actual literary activity and to the tendency to evaluate even so powerful a writer as Ammianus within an overall conception of decline. Such is the power of these assumptions that until recently late Roman literature has generally been studied only by specialists and from a historical point of view. Only very rarely as yet, if at all, have any late antique writers been subjected to a genuinely literary-critical approach. Yet this is the challenge that would move the subject on from literary history to the history of culture.

CHAPTER 23*a*

SYRIAC CULTURE, 337-425

SEBASTIAN BROCK

I. INTRODUCTION

Around the turn of the Christian era the Fertile Crescent had witnessed the emergence of a number of local Aramaic dialects in written form: Nabataean (from the second century B.C.), Palmyrene (from mid first century B.C.), an early form of Syriac (Proto-Syriac; from the early first century A.D.),¹ and Hatran (from the first century A.D.). All these dialects are known only from inscriptions (and, in the case of Nabataean and Proto-Syriac, a few documents on papyrus and skin); only in the case of Proto-Syriac is it certain that the dialect was used for literary purposes as well (though the few literary texts from the first to the third century come down to us in the slightly different later form of the language known as Classical Syriac). Some sixty or so short Proto-Syriac inscriptions from Edessa and its vicinity, dating from the first to the third century A.D., have been found, the majority of which are cultic or funerary (the latter often accompanied by mosaic portraits executed in a Parthian style). Of exceptional interest are three Syriac legal documents dating from 240, 242 and 243, the last found at Dura Europos, and the other two associated with a collection of seventeen Greek documents from Mesopotamia dating between 232 and 252.

Since Syriac, the Aramaic dialect of Edessa (modern Urfa),² soon became the literary vehicle for Aramaic-speaking Christianity, this dialect (in its Classical form) rapidly spread over a wide area as a literary language, both in the eastern provinces of the Roman empire, and over the border into the Parthian (subsequently Sasanian) empire.

The origins of Syriac literary culture were thus unlike those of Armenian and Georgian, where it was Christianity which provided the initial stimulus for using the spoken language as a vehicle for literature. There is considerable resemblance, on the other hand, with the situation for Coptic: both

* Nearly complete bibliographical coverage can be found by consulting Moss (1962), Brock (1973-92). ¹ See Jenni (1965).

² Ancient writers use a variety of different terms for Syriac, the most precise being 'Edessene' and 'the language of Mesopotamia'. The dialects of Aramaic spoken in Syria I and II to the west of the Euphrates will have been somewhat different.

literary cultures have a long ancestry, embodied in earlier forms of the two languages, Aramaic and Egyptian; and in both cultures, it was the adoption of the local written language for literary use by non-Greek-speaking Christians that ensured the success of these two languages – and indeed their survival (albeit in a very attenuated form) to the present day.

The history of Syriac literary culture prior to the fourth century is extremely obscure, with only a small number of texts surviving. Among the rare pagan texts is a philosophical letter from Mara to his son Serapion, variously dated to soon after A.D. 70 to c. 260. Original Syriac compositions include the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* (see p. 713 below), the *Acts of Thomas* and (perhaps) the *Apology of Ps. Melito*, all of the third century. Of early translations from Greek, besides the Old Syriac Gospels, there are the *Hypomnemata* of Ambrosius (a recension of Ps. Justin, *Cohortatio ad Graecos*), the *Apology* of Aristides, and the *Sayings* of Menander (unconnected with the Greek Menander tradition).

Only towards the middle of the fourth century does Syriac literature begin to emerge from its initial period of obscurity, thanks to the preservation of quite extensive works by two major writers, Aphrahat writing in the Sasanian empire between 337 and 345, and Ephrem (d. 373) in the Roman empire, based first at Nisibis (until it was ceded to the Sasanians in 363) and then at Edessa. Other extant writings from the period 337–425 are rather few, especially by comparison with the very abundant literary production that has been preserved from the following two centuries prior to the Arab invasions.

From the Sasanian empire we have the *Book of Steps* (*Liber Graduum*), a collection dating from c. 400 of thirty ascetic discourses which bear some resemblance to the Greek *Macarian Homilies* (of Syrian or Mesopotamian origin); the earliest acts of Christian martyrs put to death under Shapur II; and the earliest synodical literature (concerning synods of the Persian church in 410, 420 and 424).

From the Roman empire there are the poets Cyrillona (one of whose poems is on the invasion of the Huns in 396),³ Balai (d. after 436), author of a cycle of twelve narrative poems on the biblical patriarch Joseph (a work later attributed to Ephrem), and Isaac of Amida, who is said to have visited Rome and written poems on the Secular Games held in 404 and on the sack of the city by Alaric in 410.⁴ Other shadowy figures survive only in Armenian translation (e.g. 'Aitalaha' and Pseudo-Ephrem, author of an *Exposition of the Gospel*) or in excerpts (e.g. Abba, another disciple of

³ This invasion also provided the setting for the delightful story of Euphemia and the Goth (ed. Burkhitt (1913)), which dates from just after the period under consideration.

⁴ Ps.-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, *Chronicle* 1 (ed. Chabot, CSCO 121, pp. 32, 143–4); these are unfortunately not to be found among the many extant poems under the name of Isaac (many of which must belong to two later Isaacs).

Ephrem, and the poet Aswana). The earliest Syriac hagiography dates from this period and includes the acts of the Edessene martyrs Shmona, Gurya and Habbib (probably martyred 309 and 310),⁵ the story of the Man of God (see p. 718 below), and the prose and verse panegyrics on Abraham of Qidun (*fl.* 355/6 according to the *Chronicle of Edessa* xxi; both works were later attributed to Ephrem). From the very end of the period comes the *Teaching of Addai*, describing the origins of Christianity in Edessa, based on the apocryphal correspondence between king Abgar the Black and Jesus (which was already known to Eusebius, *HE* 1.13),⁶ closely associated with this work are two Edessene martyr acts, equally legendary, of Sharbel and Barsamya, allegedly martyred under Trajan. It is likely that some of the imaginative anonymous works on biblical figures, in both prose and verse, belong to the early fifth century. Translations from Greek of several fourth-century Christian writings were also undertaken (see p. 718 below).

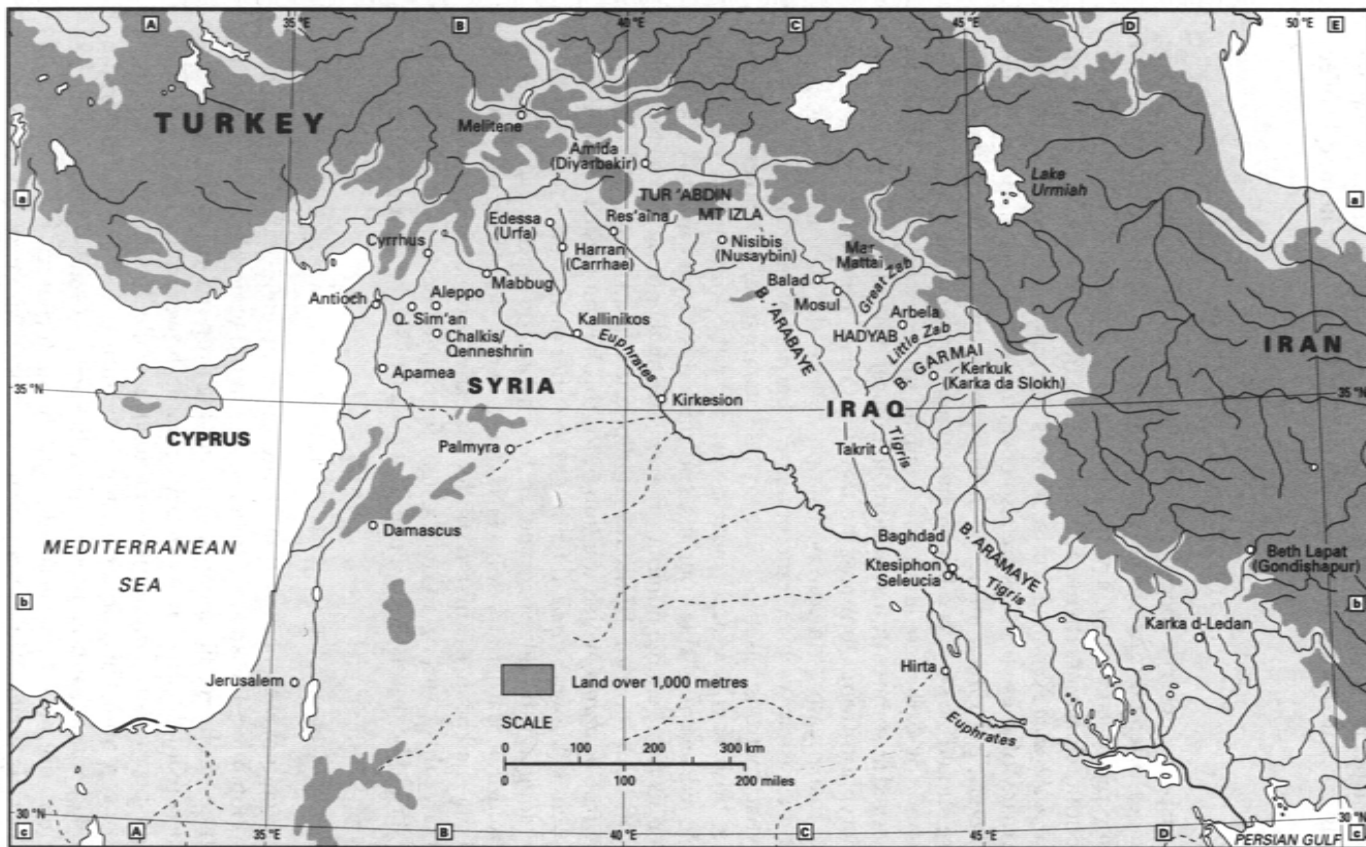
What survives from the period is sufficient to indicate both the multifarious character and the sophistication of Syriac culture. Here it is worth reflecting on the reasons why hardly any pre-fourth-century and comparatively little fourth-century literature survives, for it is clear that what comes down to us is only a fragment of what must once have existed. Syriac literature has been transmitted largely thanks to monastic copyists and libraries, and so the selection of texts copied will reflect the interests and concerns of these scribes and their patrons. One obvious consequence of this was the loss of writings by authors (such as Bardaisan and Mani) whose views were later considered heterodox.⁷ But there is a further important consideration – namely, a change in literary taste which evidently took place in the early Arab period, and which we are able to observe thanks to the preservation of a sizeable number of Syriac manuscripts which date from the fifth and sixth centuries: had these not been preserved⁸ we would be vastly poorer in our knowledge of pre-sixth-century Syriac literature, for a large number of the texts preserved in these early manuscripts were never subsequently recopied (or, if they were, it was mostly in excerpted form). Thus, for example, but for the survival of nine (often fragmentary) manuscripts of the fifth and sixth centuries, we should have none of the hymn

⁵ Shmona and Gurya were executed on 15 November, and Habbib burnt on 2 September, but the evidence for the years in question is conflicting; see Burkitt (1913) 29–34.

⁶ On this see Brock (1996).

⁷ This also applies, *a fortiori*, to pagan religious literature (some excerpts, possibly genuine, from Baba, a third-century pagan prophet of Harran, are preserved at the end of a collection of Greek pagan prophecies (related to the Greek Theosophia), compiled in Syriac c. 600: cf. Brock (1983a)). For the scanty remains on papyri of Manichean literature in Syriac, see Burkitt (1923) 111–19; the recent discovery in Egypt of fragments of a Manichean bilingual Syriac-Coptic literary work (see ch. 23(b), p. 735 below) is of great significance for the way in which Manichean texts travelled (a Greek intermediary had previously been considered *a sine qua non*).

⁸ Largely thanks to the bibliophile Moses of Nisibis, abbot of the Syrian monastery in the Wadi Natroun, Egypt, in the early tenth century.



Map 9 Syriac centres in the Middle East

cycles of the most famous of all Syriac authors, Ephrem, for later copyists simply excerpted and abbreviated single hymns for use in liturgical collections.

II. LITERARY GENRES

Two aspects deserve special mention. Several prose writings incorporate passages, often quite extensive, where use is made, for heightened effect, of artistic prose, employing a variety of rhetorical features such as isocola, anaphora, chiasmus, rhyme and assonance. In a few cases (e.g. Ephrem, *Sermo de Domino Nostro*) an entire work is written in this style. It is striking that many of these features are also characteristic of contemporary Greek *Kunstprosa*, but Greek influence in this case is unlikely, for Syriac artistic prose should be seen as a largely independent phenomenon which developed out of earlier traditions of Aramaic prose (examples of which are preserved in some early inscriptions, in biblical Aramaic, and in the Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran): the fact that Greek and Syriac artistic prose share many features in common simply reflects the rhetorical fashions of the time, fashions which transcended the barriers of language.

Syriac metre is based on syllabic, not quantitative, principles. Ephrem wrote both narrative and stanzaic verse; for the former (the *mēmṛā*) he employed seven-syllable couplets, and since this metre came to be known under his name a large number of *mēmṛē* definitely not by him were attributed to him. Most of Ephrem's large poetic output consists of stanzaic verse (the *madrāshā*, which was sung); for this he employs over fifty different metres (known as *qālē*, referring to the titles of the tunes to which they were sung). Although Sozomen, in his chapter on Ephrem (*HE* III.16), asserted that Bardaisan's son Harmonius, being 'deeply versed in Greek learning', had been 'the first to subdue his native tongue to metres and metrical law', this claim of a Greek origin for Syriac poetry is highly unlikely and should be dismissed as a manifestation of Greek cultural chauvinism.

III. THE THREEFOLD INHERITANCE

Syriac culture was heir to three quite different literary cultures: ancient Mesopotamian, Jewish and Greek. In the period up to 425, elements from all three can be readily identified, in varying proportions, in the extant literature; from the early fifth century onwards, however, the Greek element rapidly becomes the predominant influence, while the other two fade into the background. This applies equally to the history of Syriac culture in the Sasanian empire, although there the influence of Greek culture on Syriac literature does not become strong until the sixth century.

The only ancient Mesopotamian text of non-Jewish provenance to reach

Syriac is the story of Ahiqar; fragments of the earlier Aramaic text from which the Syriac ultimately derives are known from the Elephantine papyri (fifth century B.C.). The Mesopotamian literary genre of precedence-dispute continued to enjoy great popularity in Syriac, normally in verse form; Ephrem already adapts the genre to Christian use, with formal disputes between Death and Satan, and it is likely that several of the delightful anonymous Syriac dispute and dialogue poems go back to the early fifth century.⁹ Other traces of the ancient Mesopotamian heritage are chiefly discernible in the transmission of certain ancient religious themes such as the 'medicine of life' (Akkadian *sam balāṭi*, Syriac *sam ḥayyē*) which were Christianized at an early date and so made part of Syriac liturgical vocabulary.¹⁰

The Jewish heritage is most obviously reflected by the Syriac translation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament); this is not a unified work, but it is likely that most books were translated somewhere around the second century A.D. – some, at least, probably by Jews rather than Christians. Certain books (notably the Pentateuch and Chronicles) have some indirect links with an early form of the Jewish Aramaic biblical translations known as the Targums. Jewish influence also came through translations of various non-canonical books, such as the Apocalypse of Baruch (preserved complete only in Syriac) and the Apocalypse of Ezra, or through oral tradition. The latter channel is probably the source of the several striking links with Jewish exegetical tradition which are to be found above all in Ephrem's *Commentary on Genesis*, and in the Syriac compilation, composed in the tradition of the Jewish 'rewritten Bible', known as the *Cave of Treasures* (whose origins seem to go back to the third or fourth century).

It is disputed whether these non-biblical elements of Jewish provenance go back to the earliest stages of Syriac Christianity (implying a sizeable number of early converts from Judaism – the majority view), or whether they are the result of borrowing at a later stage, in the fourth century (thus H. Drijvers, according to whom earliest Syriac Christianity was overwhelmingly of pagan background).

Greek culture had been an effective presence in the Near East for well over half a millennium by the time of Ephrem's birth, c. 306, and the first surviving example of Syriac literature, the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, from the school of Bardaisan (d. 222), consciously adopts the Greek form of the philosophical dialogue and belongs to the Greek intellectual world.

⁹ E.g. the Dispute of the Months, which successfully combines the Mesopotamian precedence dispute with the Greek *ekphrasis* tradition.

¹⁰ See especially Widengren (1946). Included in the Mesopotamian heritage was also an Iranian component. By the time the local Christian population of Adiabene came to show an interest in their Mesopotamian past (perhaps the sixth century), knowledge of this was by then only accessible to them by way of the Bible and the Greek chronicle tradition.

Thus it is hardly surprising that even the two fourth-century authors who were writing outside the Roman empire, Aphrahat and the anonymous author of the *Liber Graduum*, both show at least some awareness of Greek rhetorical models; in the case of Aphrahat this is reflected in his very choice of the title 'Demonstrations' (i.e. *Epideixeis*), alongside 'Letters', whereas the author of the *Liber Graduum* seems to aim at some sort of fusion between the *genus demonstrativum* and the *genus deliberativum*. One should, however, be wary of trying to fit all Syriac literature of this period into the straitjacket of Greek rhetorical models (there is better justification in the case of late-fifth- and sixth-century writers).

IV. INTERACTION BETWEEN SYRIAC AND GREEK CULTURE

The interaction between Greek and Syriac culture in Syria and northern Mesopotamia was in fact a complex affair, and in the period under consideration the juxtaposition of the two literary cultures resulted in mutual enrichment, as will be seen below (p. 717). There were in fact no clear-cut boundaries between Greek and Aramaic/Syriac speakers in the provinces of Syria I and II, Euphratesia and Mesopotamia; rather, one should think of this as an area of bilingual overlap, where a substantial proportion of the population will have been to some extent bilingual, and where at least a few of the better educated are likely to have been bicultural as well (even though writers normally confined themselves to a single language; an exception, just after the end of the period under consideration, seems to have been Rabbula, bishop of Edessa (see p. 716 below)). In the towns west of the Euphrates, Greek will have predominated as the language of the educated classes, though some dialect of Aramaic was widespread among the lower classes (cf. *Lib. Or.* XLII.31, referring to it as the language of tinkers), and will have been the norm in the countryside.¹¹

John Chrysostom, whose parents were both 'of noble family' from Antioch (*Socr. HE* vi.3) probably did not speak the local Aramaic dialect¹² and referred to it as 'barbaric' (*PG* L.646). Theodore (subsequently bishop of Mopsuestia) and Theodoret (subsequently bishop of Cyrrhus), on the other hand, who were also born of wealthy Antiochene parents, were bilingual (Theodoret's mother tongue was probably Syriac: cf. *Hist. Rel.* XXI.15, and he implies that his Greek culture had to be acquired: *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio* v.75). Both men, though they wrote only in Greek, made use of their knowledge of Syriac in their exegetical works. Severian, bishop

¹¹ Thus Theodoret specifies that the peoples of Osrhoene, Syria, Euphretesia, Palestine and Phoinike all spoke dialects of Aramaic (*Quaestio* 19, *in Iudices*).

¹² According to Palladius, *Dial.* v, John's father was a *stratelates*. Compare Theod. *Hist. Rel.* xiii.7, where some 'generals' need an interpreter to speak to the ascetic Macedonius when they visited him just outside Antioch after the riots of 387.

of Gabala, despite his renown for learning and eloquence in Greek, never lost his strong Syriac accent (Socr. *HE* vi.1).

Although local dialects of Aramaic clearly provided the everyday language of the countryside of Syria in the fourth and early fifth century, Edessene Syriac appears only rarely to have been used to the west of the Euphrates during this period: the first known Syriac writers who were active west of the river were Balai (Qenneshrin/Chalkis) and John of Apamea, both writing mainly in the second quarter of the fifth century.¹³ This picture is borne out by the incidence of Syriac inscriptions west of the Euphrates: these predominantly belong to north Syria and to the sixth century: only a small number are dated to the fifth century or before, the earliest being a fragmentary bilingual Greek–Syriac inscription of 389 (Babisqa, in the Jebel Barisha, *IGLS* II.555), followed by another bilingual one of 407 (Burj el Qas, in the Jebel Sim'an, *IGLS* II.373). We thus have a paradoxical situation: in the sixth century, at a time when the prestige of Greek culture was resulting in ever stronger influence on Syriac literature, Syriac was actually gaining ground as a written language to the west of the Euphrates.

In the fourth and early fifth century, Syriac still tended to be despised as 'barbaric' to the west of the Euphrates, but to the east of the river it could hold its own as a literary language alongside Greek. At Zeugma, one of the main crossing points, the ascetic Publius built two adjacent monastic establishments for his followers, one where Greek was used as the liturgical language, the other where Syriac was employed (Theod. *Hist. Rel.* v.5). Compared with the relative abundance of Greek inscriptions found west of the Euphrates, their paucity to the east of the river is striking, though Greek must have been widely used in towns like Edessa which served as administrative centres. Thus at Nisibis when the priest Akepsimas erected a baptistery in 359/60 during the bishopric of Walgash/Volagesias he recorded this in Greek,¹⁴ rather than in the language of Nisibis' renowned poet Ephrem, his exact contemporary. If some authors, like Eusebius, bishop of Emesa (but who originated from Edessa), chose to write in Greek, this was because their parents had been wealthy enough to afford to send their son away to be educated in Greek schools:¹⁵ at the famous 'Persian School' in Edessa (probably already in existence in the early

¹³ Syriac writers associated with Antioch are very few and all belong after the period covered here (hence Antioch features only in passing in this chapter).

¹⁴ For the inscription, see Jarry (1972) 242–3 (no. 74). On the other hand, Abraham, bishop of Harran (but originally from the region of Cyrrhus), could not understand Greek (Theod. *Hist. Rel.* xvii.9).

¹⁵ Eusebius made use of his knowledge of Syriac in his exegetical writings (he also knew some Hebrew, an exceptional attainment among Christian biblical exegetes of his time). A poem against riches by Isaac, perhaps Isaac of Amida, describes how the wealthy master goes off wandering in discomfort in his search for education while his servants enjoy a restful life at home (*Carmen* 31, ed. Bickell, II, p. 106).

decades of the fifth century) Syriac was the language of instruction.¹⁶ On the other hand, it is significant that Rabbula, who came from a wealthy family in Chalkis, and who is described by his panegyrist as 'highly educated in Greek literature', evidently chose to write in Syriac¹⁷ as well as in Greek, once he had been appointed bishop of Edessa (412–35).

Thus in the areas where Greek and Syriac culture met, there is likely to have been a gradation, running between those for whom Greek was their only language (both written and spoken), those who were bilingual but wrote only in Greek, those who were bilingual but wrote only in Syriac, and those whose knowledge of Greek was minimal or non-existent. This gradation will have run along lines partly social and partly geographical, west to east, with the sharpest divide being provided by the Euphrates. Aphrahat and the author of the *Liber Graduum*, who both lived beyond the boundaries of the Roman empire, will belong to the last category. Thus neither author shows any direct acquaintance even with Christian Greek literature, and though both authors use quite a number of Greek words (Aphrahat just over sixty, the *Liber Graduum* just over seventy), most of these will have been already familiar from the Syriac Bible, while the others belong to the external trappings of Greek civilization.¹⁸ Both in their mode of expression and in the structure of their thought, these two writers belong to an intellectual world that has far more in common with that of the Bible and the ancient Near East than with that of the Greek cultural world.

The case with Ephrem is rather different, for he is clearly much more aware of the contemporary Greek intellectual climate, and he may have read Greek (though Theodoret states that he did not: *HE* iv. 29): he knows, for example, of Albinus' *On the Incorporeal* (*Prose Refutations* II, p. iii), lists a series of opinions on the soul (*Hymns on Faith* I), and alludes on at least two occasions in his hymns to episodes in Greek mythology (*Hymns on Paradise* III.8 (Tantalus); *Carmina Nisibena* xxxvi.5 (Orpheus – whose portrayal on a mosaic in Edessa he may well have known)). Moreover, it is important to remember that when he speaks of the 'bitterness of the wisdom of the Greeks' (*Hymns on Faith* II.24), the term 'Greeks' (*Yawnāyē*) has the sense of 'Hellenes', i.e. pagan Greeks, as it does when Athanasius speaks of 'the wisdom of the Greeks being shown to be foolish' (*De Incarnatione Verbi*

¹⁶ The Acts of the second council of Ephesus (449) mention only 'Schools of the Armenians, Persians and Syrians' at Edessa (ed. Flemming, 24–5).

¹⁷ The Syriac writings attributed to him probably date from after 427; this certainly applies to his Syriac translation of Cyril of Alexandria's *Oratio ad Theodosium Imperatorem de Fide*.

¹⁸ Among the communities deported from Syria by Shapur I and II and settled at Gondishapur (Syriac Beth Lapat) and elsewhere, there were Greek-speaking Christians who continued to use Greek in the liturgy (e.g. Chronicle of Seert, *PO* IV.222, Rev Ardashir in Persis). Middle Persian was probably not adopted by Christians in the Sasanian empire as an alternative literary language until the sixth century.

xlvi). Ephrem is not opposed to Greek culture as such, but only to the misapplication of 'pagan wisdom' to Christian theology. As far as he himself is concerned, however, he prefers to express his own extremely sophisticated theological thought, not in philosophical categories current in the Greek-speaking world of the time, but in poetic ones where symbol and paradox, rather than definition, serve as the basic tools for discourse.

V. SYRIAC INTO GREEK AND GREEK INTO SYRIAC

In the late fourth and early fifth centuries there was a considerable amount of direct exchange between the two languages in the form of translations in both directions.¹⁹ Jerome, writing in 392 (*De Viris Illustribus* 115), had already read in Greek translation a work by Ephrem on the Holy Spirit (unidentified), and such was the renown of Ephrem as a poet that a number of his works, both verse and prose, were soon rendered into Greek (Sozom. *HE* III.16). The Greek translations of Ephrem's narrative verse reproduce the seven-syllable metre of the original. It so happens that very few of the extant Ephrem Graecus texts can be matched with surviving Syriac originals (a notable exception is the long narrative poem (*mēmra*) on Jonah). It seems likely that these metrical translations gave rise to the use of syllabic metres for narrative poems actually composed in Greek: this probably applies to the Greek poems, attributed to Ephrem, on Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22) and on Elijah (1 Kings 17), neither of which has any direct relationship to the various Syriac poems on these topics.

Further witness to the very considerable prestige enjoyed by Syriac poetry in the late fourth and early fifth centuries even in the Greek world is provided by Theodore of Mopsuestia, who mentions that Flavian of Antioch and Diodore of Tarsus translated various Syriac liturgical texts in verse into Greek (*apud* Niketas Akominatos, *Thesaurus* v.30, *PG* CXXXIX.1390c).²⁰

Although it remains uncertain whether any of Ephrem's many stanzaic poems (*madrāshe*) were translated into Greek,²¹ it is very probable that the *madrāshā* form provides the main source of inspiration for the innovative genre in Greek of the *kontakion*, a form of hymn perfected by Romanos in the early sixth century, but for which the oldest examples (anonymous) probably belong to the fifth century. The borrowing is not, however, a

¹⁹ Earlier translations from Syriac into Greek include *The Book of the Laws of Countries*, from the school of Bardaisan, excerpts of which are quoted in Ps.-Clement, *Recognitions* ix.19–29, and in Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* vi.10.1–48.

²⁰ A famous passage in Augustine's *Confessions* (ix.7) witnesses to the influence of oriental hymnody in the west at this time.

²¹ George Synkellos' *Ecloga Chronographica* (ed. Mosshammer, p. 15) contains a quotation from Ephrem which has been identified as *Hymns on Paradise* i.10–11, but the correspondence is not at all close.

mechanical one, for the *kontakion* introduces an important new feature, homotony, which is absent from the Syriac model.

A number of hagiographical works composed in Syriac also found their way into Greek. Most influential of these was *The History of the Man of God*, which, once translated into Greek, was expanded and its hero given the name Alexius (in due course the tale was translated back into Syriac in its expanded form). Another work quickly translated into Greek was the history of the ascetic Abraham of Qidun and his niece Mary, wrongly attributed to Ephrem. The Greek versions of both these hagiographies soon found their way into Latin, where they were to enjoy great popularity in the Middle Ages. Knowledge of the Persian martyrs under Shapur II was brought back to the Roman empire by Marutha, bishop of Martyropolis (Maipharqat), who had been sent by Arcadius on embassy to Yezdegerd I in 408. As a result of the publicity brought by Marutha (already reflected in a Syriac manuscript²² written in Edessa in November 411, where the names of some Persian martyrs have been added to a calendar), many of the Syriac acts of these martyrs were translated into Greek.

Between the fourth and the seventh centuries an impressively large number of Greek texts, mostly of Christian provenance, was translated into Syriac. This process was evidently well under way before the end of the fourth century. Translations which certainly belong to the period 337-425 are Titus of Bostra's *Against the Manicheans* (only parts of which survive in Greek), the *Clementine Recognitions*, and two works by Eusebius, his *Theophania*, of which only fragments in Greek survive, and the long recension (lost in Greek) of his *Palestinian Martyrs*: all these are included in the Edessene manuscript of 411 just mentioned. Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, and perhaps a number of works by Basil (including his *De Legendis Gentilium Libris*)²³ – all preserved in fifth-century manuscripts – may also antedate 425; in the case of Basil's *Homilies* the Syriac translation is remarkably free and expansive. Probably already in the last decades of the fourth century, sporadic attempts were made to revise the Old Syriac Gospels, bringing the translation closer into line with the Greek original; this process, which probably also covered the rest of the Syriac canon of the New Testament (omitting 2 Peter, 2-3 John, Jude and Revelation), seems to have been completed in the early fifth century, and the revision, subsequently named the Peshitta, became the standard Syriac version of the New Testament.

In the fourth century, then, Syriac literary culture belonged to the east of

²² British Library MS. Add. 12150, which has the distinction of being the earliest dated Christian literary manuscript in any language. The elegant format of this vellum codex suggests that it is the product of an already long-established scribal tradition in Syriac.

²³ The earliest Syriac translations of pagan Greek literature are probably from later in the fifth century; most belong to the sixth to ninth centuries.

the river Euphrates: from its original home in Edessa, it had already spread eastwards, with Christianity, into the Sasanian empire, where it existed alongside two other Aramaic literary dialects associated with other religious communities, Babylonian Jewish Aramaic and Mandaean. By contrast, it was only late in the fifth century, and especially in the sixth, that Syriac culture effectively crossed the Euphrates to extend westwards to the Aramaic-speaking areas of the Mediterranean littoral as well. In its own homeland in the fourth and fifth centuries Syriac culture was experiencing what was perhaps to be its finest outburst of literary creativity, witnessed above all in the outstanding religious poetry of Ephrem.

CHAPTER 23b

COPTIC LITERATURE, 337–425

MARK SMITH

Egyptian literature of the period A.D. 337–425 consists entirely of texts written in the Coptic script. Of the earlier forms of writing developed by the Egyptians, hieratic seems to have been the first to fall into disuse. The latest known hieratic texts come from the third century. Hieroglyphic and demotic continued to have a restricted use for some time afterwards. The latest known hieroglyphic inscription was written in 394, the latest demotic text in 452. However, neither form of writing was employed for literary purposes during the period under consideration.¹

The Coptic script uses the Greek alphabet, augmented by characters borrowed from demotic. The language of texts written in this script represents the final stage in the development of the tongue spoken by the ancient Egyptians. So-called Old Coptic texts provide the earliest specimens of both script and language. These are attested from the first century A.D. onwards; all are magical or astrological.² The earliest known Coptic texts, properly speaking, date from the third century, and it is with these that our knowledge of Coptic literature may be said to begin.

Throughout Egypt, Coptic was written in a variety of dialects. Experts disagree over the precise number of these, but it is generally accepted that there were six principal literary dialects. They are: (1) Sa'idic, a dialect of uncertain (Theban?) origin which served as the standard literary language everywhere in the Nile Valley during the period under consideration; (2)

* *Bibliographical note.* The chief bibliographical aids for Coptic are the following: Kammerer (1951) (covers materials published prior to 1949); Simon (1949–66), Simon and Quecke (1967), and du Bourguet (1971–6), covering the years 1940–76; Biedenkopf-Ziehner (1972–80), covering the period 1967–79; and Orlandi (1982–), which covers the period 1980 to the present. The most important bibliographies devoted specifically to Coptic literature are those of Krause (1980); Orlandi (1970) 59–158; *idem* (1986). There are also bibliographies dealing with specific genres of Coptic literature; these will be cited below under the appropriate headings. A useful starting point for information on this subject is Orlandi's article on Coptic literature in A. S. Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 5 (1991) 1451–60. The *Encyclopedia* itself contains a wide range of articles on specific authors, texts, and groups of texts discussed in this chapter.

¹ For a convenient account of the history of the various forms of Egyptian writing, see Davies (1987) 16–27.

² See Kahle (1954) 1, 252–6; Quaegebeur (1982); Satzinger (1991).

Bohairic, the dialect of the western delta and Nitria; (3) Fayyumic, that of the Fayyum; (4) Middle Egyptian, current at Oxyrhynchus and its environs; (5) Akhmimic, whose centre of diffusion was Akhmim; and (6) Subakhmimic or Lycopolitan, which may have been the dialect of the region around Assiut.³ Not all of these dialects are uniform entities. Early Bohairic, for example, is very different from later Bohairic.⁴ Some contemporary groups of Subakhmimic manuscripts display such a large number of divergent features that proposals have been made to identify them as representatives of distinct dialects.⁵

The texts that will be cited in the following pages were inscribed, with rare exceptions, in codices with leaves of papyrus or parchment.⁶ Normally, these bear no date, although in cases where the binding of a codex has been preserved, inscribed material found within it can provide valuable clues for dating.⁷ Otherwise, the age of the MSS. in question must be determined on palaeographical grounds alone. Coptic palaeography is far from being an exact science; consequently, attempting to date Coptic texts within the narrow limits specified in the heading of the present chapter is a somewhat hazardous enterprise. In many cases, the best that one can do is to assign a text to a particular century, without being more exact. Sometimes not even this is possible; hence the virtual absence of precise dates from the account that follows.⁸

Coptic literature of the period A.D. 337–425 was essentially a functional literature. It was composed for a definite purpose, not simply as fine writing intended to be enjoyed for its own sake. This purpose was invariably religious in nature. Texts were written for use in liturgy and ritual, public worship and private devotion, or for instruction and edification. Another notable feature of Coptic literature during the period under consideration is that most of it was originally composed in other languages, chiefly Greek, and translated into Coptic subsequently. For purposes of discussion, this literature may be divided into six categories: magical texts, the Bible and Apocrypha, patristic and homiletic works, monastic texts and martyrologies, the Nag Hammadi library and related tractates, and Manichean writings.

³ Kahle (1954) 1, 193–268, provides a comprehensive treatment of the Coptic literary dialects. Some of his conclusions have been modified by others. For a survey of recent opinions, see Kasser in Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 8, 133–41; also articles *ibid.* on the major dialects by various authors.

⁴ Cf. Kasser (1958) vii–xii; Shisha-Halevy (1991a) 57–8.

⁵ Funk (1985); Nagel (1991a).

⁶ For exceptions, see Kahle (1954) 1, 275–6; section IV below.

⁷ E.g. Shelton in Barns *et al.* (1981) 1–11.

⁸ For the nature of the problems involved in dating Coptic texts, see Layton (1985). Kahle (1954) 1, 269–78, published a list of MSS. written prior to the sixth century that were known to him in 1953; this is extremely valuable, but now needs updating.

I. MAGICAL TEXTS

Coptic magical texts as a group can hardly be called literary. However, some contain narrative passages, hymns and prayers which merit that description. The only such specimen from the period under consideration occurs in a codex of fourth-century date discovered at Thebes and now in Paris.⁹ The spell in question, written in a form of Old Coptic closely allied to Sa'idic and Bohairic, is designed to gain the love of a recalcitrant woman. Its first half consists of a mythological narrative in which the goddess Isis complains to her father Thoth that she has been betrayed by her husband Osiris. Thoth explains how Isis may rekindle Osiris' love by means of an iron spike which she is to dip in her husband's blood. The second half contains the incantation which the magician must recite in order to enchant the object of his desire.

The two halves of the spell are closely related. The narrative provides the environment within which the incantation can take effect. By ritual allusion to or re-enactment of an event from the mythological sphere, the magician seeks to trigger off or actualize a similar event in his own. Spells like this one are of particular interest since, after the triumph of Christianity in Egypt, it was largely through them that the older pagan religious traditions were preserved.¹⁰

II. THE BIBLE AND APOCRYPHA

Virtually the earliest written evidence for the transmission of the Bible to the native population of Egypt is a Greek-Coptic glossary to Hosea and Amos.¹¹ This was inscribed on the verso of a land register late in the third century. The dialect is Middle Egyptian. Roughly contemporary are the Coptic glosses found in a pair of Greek manuscripts, one containing Isaiah¹² and the other the Minor Prophets.¹³ The glosses in the former are written in an early type of Fayyumic; those in the latter are written in Sa'idic.

Only a single Coptic biblical text may be dated to this period with certainty. A bilingual school tablet found at Thebes is inscribed with eight verses of Psalm 46 in Akhmimic, as well as a Greek paraphrase of the opening lines of the *Iliad* and miscellaneous exercises.¹⁴ Other Coptic biblical MSS. assignable to the end of the third century or slightly later are a

⁹ Preisendanz (1928-31) I, 70-6; cf. Meyer (1985).

¹⁰ Cf. the spell of eighth-century date discussed by Kákosy (1961). Additional bibliography on texts of this genre is given by Donadoni (1987) and Vycichl (1991).

¹¹ Bell and Thompson (1925).

¹² Crum *apud* Kenyon (1937) ix-xii; Vaccari (1951).

¹³ Sanders and Schmidt (1927) 46-8.

¹⁴ Crum (1934-7), amended by Lefort (1935). For the dating, cf. Roberts (1979) 67.

Sa'idic version of Ecclesiastes, now in Louvain;¹⁵ a bilingual codex in Hamburg inscribed with the Acts of Paul in Greek, the Song of Songs and Lamentations in early Fayyumic, as well as Ecclesiastes in both languages;¹⁶ a version of Proverbs in a dialect otherwise unattested;¹⁷ and a codex formerly in the possession of the University of Mississippi containing Melito of Sardis on the Pascha, an extract from 2 Maccabees, 1 Peter, Jonah, and an Easter homily, all in Sa'idic.¹⁸

It is interesting to note the preponderance of texts belonging to the Old Testament among those described so far. The manuscript evidence of the fourth and fifth centuries presents a very different picture. Here, MSS. inscribed with books of the New Testament may be seen to predominate. Even within the aforesaid period a change is apparent, the ratio of New Testament MSS. to those of the Old Testament being higher in the fifth century than in the preceding one.¹⁹

It is not clear whether the manuscript evidence reflects a genuine shift in interest or emphasis, or simply an accident of preservation. Whatever the case, the period of the fourth–fifth centuries witnessed a number of undoubted developments in the process of transmission of the scriptures into Coptic. Chief among these must be reckoned the completion and standardization of the Sa'idic version of the Bible, which were probably effected before the close of the fourth century.²⁰ At the same time, translations were being made into the other principal dialects, although it is not known how much of the Bible was rendered into each one. Nor is the relationship of the various versions to one another fully understood.²¹

With respect to the New Testament, which has been studied more extensively than the Old, there is general agreement that the Bohairic version was made independently of the Sa'idic.²² Some experts believe that the Fayyumic version of this period was derived partially from the Bohairic.²³ Others accord the Fayyumic priority.²⁴ The relationship of the remaining versions to the one found in Sa'idic is particularly disputed. Some think that the Akhmimic, Subakhmimic and Middle Egyptian renderings were made independently.²⁵ Others argue that they were translated from the Sa'idic.²⁶

¹⁵ Lefort (1940) 59–65 with plate 5. ¹⁶ See Diebner and Kasser (1989).

¹⁷ Kasser (1960a); cf. *idem* (1980) 53 note 4.

¹⁸ Willis (1961) 383–9 with plate 5. On the present location of this manuscript, see Goehring (1991) 657–8.

¹⁹ This estimate is based chiefly on the lists published by Kahle (1954) 1, 269–74, supplemented for the New Testament by Metzger (1977) 108–25. The picture is not altered significantly by material published subsequently. ²⁰ Mink (1972) 181–2.

²¹ For literature on this problem, see references cited by Metzger (1991) and Nagel (1991b). Lists of published MSS. of the different versions have been compiled by Vaschalde (1919–33), Till (1959–60) and Nagel (1989).

²² For the textual affinities of the two, see Metzger (1977) 133–8; Mink (1972) 161–6, 168–77.

²³ Kahle (1954) 1, 279–85. ²⁴ Layton (1976) 176.

²⁵ Weigandt (1969); cf. Mink (1972) 177–87. ²⁶ Kasser (1965) 302–3.

As will be evident from the above remarks, the history of the Coptic Bible, particularly during the crucial years of the period under consideration, is a subject on which a vast amount of research remains to be done. In this branch of Coptic literary studies, the lack of criteria whereby texts may be dated precisely poses problems of an especially difficult nature, perhaps more so than in any other branch. The need for further investigation into the Coptic versions of the Old Testament is particularly acute.²⁷

A large quantity of apocryphal literature has been preserved in Coptic.²⁸ Both Old and New Testament apocrypha are attested. The earliest known specimens occur in MSS. datable to the fourth century, roughly coeval with some of the early MSS. containing translations of the Bible. Here, I shall mention briefly a number of works that are extant in manuscripts securely dated either to that century or to the subsequent one.

An Apocalypse of Elijah is attested by four codices, three in Sa'idic and one in Akhmimic. All were written either in the fourth or the fifth century.²⁹ The Akhmimic codex preserves a number of leaves of an untitled apocalyptic work as well.³⁰ One of the Sa'idic codices has a leaf inscribed with a text of similar contents.³¹ This includes the words 'Truly I, Zephaniah, saw these things in my vision', and is presumably a fragment of an apocalypse attributed to the prophet of that name. Some authorities think that the Akhmimic leaves are part of this work as well.³² Others deny that they have any connection with it.³³

Fragments of the Testaments of Abraham and Job are preserved in a Sa'idic manuscript of fifth-century date.³⁴ Another text, variously known as the Ascension or the Vision of Isaiah, is attested by two MSS., both of the fourth century. One is Akhmimic, the other Sa'idic.³⁵ The work consists of an account of the prophet's martyrdom, followed by a description of an apocalyptic vision which he is said to have witnessed. These and the texts mentioned in the preceding paragraph were translated into Coptic from Greek. The originals may have been composed in a Jewish milieu. However, the Coptic versions of some of them show unmistakable signs of adaptation for Christian use.

Among New Testament apocryphal works may be mentioned the Acts of Paul and the Letter of the Apostles. The former is attested by three manuscripts. Two are of fourth-century date, one of them written in the Akhmimic dialect and the other in a dialect variously described as

²⁷ For recent work in this area, see e.g. Diebner (1983); Nagel (1983-4). Cf. also literature cited by the latter (1991b).

²⁸ Krause (1980) cols. 697-707 provides a full list of texts. Cf. Orlandi (1983); Perez (1991).

²⁹ Pietersma *et al.* (1981). ³⁰ Steindorff (1899) 34-65.

³¹ *Ibid.* 110-13. ³² E.g. Wintemute (1983). ³³ Diebner (1978).

³⁴ Perez (1991) 164.

³⁵ For the former, see Lefort (1939) 7-10; Lacau (1946). For the latter, see Lefort (1938) 24-30.

Subakhmimic or Sa'idic.³⁶ The third manuscript has been assigned to the fifth century; it is written in the Subakhmimic dialect.³⁷ The Letter of the Apostles purports to record the contents of a revelation made by the risen Jesus to his disciples and followers. This is preserved in an Akhmimic codex of the fourth or fifth century.³⁸ The Coptic versions of both works have been translated from Greek originals. According to Tertullian, the Acts of Paul were composed by a presbyter in Asia Minor.³⁹ Some believe that the Letter of the Apostles originated there as well. That such texts were translated into Coptic may be evidence of a connection between Asiatic Christianity and a section of the Christian community within Egypt.⁴⁰

Accounts of the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul are preserved in a Sa'idic manuscript of late-fourth- or early-fifth-century date.⁴¹ Several additional apocryphal works have been preserved among the texts discovered at Nag Hammadi. These are discussed below in the paragraphs dealing with that discovery.

III. PATRISTIC AND HOMILETIC WORKS

Patristic literature in Coptic, at least for the period A.D. 337–425, consisted chiefly if not entirely of works translated from Greek. There is no evidence that any of the Fathers of the church, even those such as Athanasius or Cyril of Alexandria, who lived in Egypt and had extensive dealings with Egyptian monks, ever wrote in the language of that country.⁴² According to a tradition preserved by Epiphanius,⁴³ a certain Hieracas (c. 270–360) was the first to write commentaries and other treatises in Coptic. No trace of his work has survived, unless it be an Akhmimic MS. of fourth-century date containing psalms or hymns which some have attributed to him.⁴⁴ This being the case, it is difficult to evaluate the tradition critically.

For the purposes of the present discussion, Coptic patristic literature may be divided into two categories: works preserved in manuscripts of the fourth and fifth centuries, and those preserved in manuscripts of later date. Only a few texts fall into the first category. The treatise on the Pascha by Melito of Sardis is attested by three early manuscripts, one Akhmimic and two Sa'idic, as well as a few fragments.⁴⁵ One of the Sa'idic MSS., which also contains Jonah, 1 Peter, an extract from 2 Maccabees, and an Easter homily, was written at the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century. The other Sa'idic MS. and its Akhmimic counterpart are certainly

³⁶ For the former, see Crum (1919–20) 5; for the latter (P. Bodmer XL1, unpublished), see Kasser (1960b); *idem* (1984) 273–5; Robinson (1990) 376–7. ³⁷ Schmidt (1904), (1905), (1909).

³⁸ Schmidt (1919). ³⁹ *De Baptismo* xvii. 5. ⁴⁰ Cf. Klijn (1986) 168 note 42; Orlandi (1986) 58.

⁴¹ See von Lemm (1890–2).

⁴² Arguments to the contrary are unconvincing, e.g. Lefort (1933a); cf. Draguet (1980) 111*–12*.

⁴³ *Haer.* LXVII.1.2–3. ⁴⁴ Lefort (1939) 1–6; Peterson (1947).

⁴⁵ See Goehring (1984); Crum and Bell (1922) 47–9.

of fourth-century date. The translation of this work into Coptic has been seen as further evidence for a connection between Asiatic Christianity and certain Christian circles within Egypt.⁴⁶

Among other texts, the Shepherd of Hermas is preserved in an Akhmimic manuscript of the fourth century⁴⁷ and a Sa'idic one of the fifth century.⁴⁸ Coeval with the latter is a Middle Egyptian version of the Didache.⁴⁹ The First Epistle of Clement is attested by two Akhmimic codices, one dating to the fourth century,⁵⁰ the other to the fifth.⁵¹ The latter contains the Gospel of John and the Epistle of James as well. There are, in addition, miscellaneous letters and sermons preserved in MSS. of fourth- or fifth-century date. These are mainly fragments and their authors have yet to be identified.⁵²

Thus far, matters are relatively straightforward. For various reasons, however, the second category of texts is more problematic. A number of genuine patristic writings are preserved in Coptic MSS. which postdate the fifth century. Full lists of these have been compiled by Krause⁵³ and Orlandi.⁵⁴ Among the authors attested are Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem, and the Cappadocians, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. Unfortunately, with rare exceptions, there is no way of knowing when the works of these writers were first translated and, consequently, it is impossible to say whether Coptic versions of them were in circulation during the fourth and fifth centuries. The point is well illustrated by the four discourses of Gregory of Nazianzus preserved in Sa'idic and Bohairic MSS. of the eighth–eleventh centuries.⁵⁵ These may have been translated as early as the fifth century, as the editor of two of them has suggested,⁵⁶ but firm evidence that they were is lacking.

The picture is further complicated by a number of late MSS. containing works that are falsely attributed to one or another of the church Fathers. Some are genuine patristic writings that have been credited to the wrong authors. Others are totally spurious, having been composed in Coptic long after the end of the period under discussion. Examples in the first category include a homily of John Chrysostom on the Canaanite woman, wrongly attributed to Eusebius of Caesarea,⁵⁷ and an exegesis of a passage from Paul's Letter to the Romans, written by Basil but credited to Athanasius.⁵⁸ Both are preserved in a Sa'idic codex of seventh-century date. A good exemplar of the second category is the cycle of homilies ascribed to

⁴⁶ Orlandi (1986) 59. ⁴⁷ Lefort (1952) ii–iv and 1–18. ⁴⁸ *Ibid.* viii–ix and 25–6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* ix–xv and 32–4. ⁵⁰ Schmidt (1908). ⁵¹ Röscher (1910) 1–88.

⁵² E.g. Crum (1905) nos. 269, 279, 285, 521, 1220; Till (1931).

⁵³ Krause (1980) columns 707, 710–11.

⁵⁴ Orlandi (1970) 69–88, 115–24. Cf. *idem* (1973), (1984).

⁵⁵ For bibliography on the editions of the MSS. in question, see Lafontaine (1981) 38–40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 43. The same writer expresses a more cautious view at Lafontaine (1980b) 39 and (1980a) 201. ⁵⁷ Mercati (1907). ⁵⁸ Orlandi (1975) 52–3.

Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria from 385 to 412.⁵⁹ Works of this type will not be taken into consideration here.

In general, it can be said that the translators of patristic literature into Coptic were not interested in theological questions as such. Rather, they were influenced by practical concerns. Texts were selected for translation either because they were valuable for liturgical purposes, or capable of providing moral instruction or spiritual edification.⁶⁰

IV. MONASTIC TEXTS AND MARTYROLOGIES

The rise of monasticism in Egypt produced a voluminous literature; however, much of this postdates the period that concerns us.⁶¹ Pachomius (c. 290–346), the founder of the first cenobitic community, was also, on present evidence, the first to write original literature in Coptic.⁶² The texts of three letters written by him for the instruction of his followers have survived on leaves dated to the fifth century.⁶³ These are in Sa'idic, the dialect spoken by their author, as are all the Coptic MSS. described in this and the next four paragraphs. Additional letters are preserved in the remains of a codex of the sixth century.⁶⁴ Greek and Latin versions of Pachomian letters are attested as well.⁶⁵ The former are of particular interest because of their early date (fourth century). Some of the letters written by Pachomius employ a form of code, which renders them partially unintelligible.⁶⁶

Two further instructions attributed to Pachomius are preserved in codices of the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁶⁷ However, many do not accept these as genuine works of his. The same is true of other fragments attributed to him in a further pair of MSS., one of seventh-century date,⁶⁸ the other written in the eleventh century.⁶⁹ According to tradition, Pachomius was the first to compose a Rule for his followers; it is probably for this that he is best known. In reality, however, he is unlikely ever to have set a particular code of behaviour down in writing. The various Pachomian rules now extant in Coptic and other languages were composed after his death.⁷⁰ Because their character is non-literary, they need not be considered here.

⁵⁹ Orlandi (1985) 103–4; cf. *idem* (1973). ⁶⁰ Orlandi (1986) 71–2.

⁶¹ For details, see Krause (1980) cols. 709–16.

⁶² Rousseau, *Pachomius*, gives a good account of his life and work. For English translations of the writings by and about Pachomius and his followers, see the three-volume collection of Veilleux (1980–2).

⁶³ Lüddeckens *et al.* (1968) 69–85 with plates 1–3; see now Quecke (1975a) 41–2 and 112–16.

⁶⁴ Quecke (1975a) 42–52 and 111–18; cf. Quecke (1976) 157.

⁶⁵ For the former, see Quecke (1975a) 52–5 and 72–110; for the latter, Boon (1932) 77–101, Quecke (1975a) 55–71. ⁶⁶ Quecke (1975a) 18–40. ⁶⁷ Lefort (1956a) vi–viii and 1–26.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* xxi–xxii and 80; cf. Quecke (1975a) 44–6. ⁶⁹ Lefort (1956a) viii–ix and 26–30.

⁷⁰ See Rousseau, *Pachomius* 48–53 and *passim*.

The two most prominent successors of Pachomius were Theodore and Horsiesios. The former (d. 368) is claimed as the author of a series of catecheses preserved in two codices of ninth-century date, as well as of fragments of instructions in a codex of the eleventh century.⁷¹ It is not certain that these were actually written by him. Also extant are two letters addressed by Theodore to the Pachomian community. One is attested by two MSS. of fifth- and sixth-century date.⁷² The other is preserved only in a Latin translation.⁷³

Four further letters are attributed to Horsiesios (d. c. 380). Two occur in a manuscript of fifth- or sixth-century date,⁷⁴ the other two in somewhat later papyrus rolls.⁷⁵ One of the first pair is addressed to Theodore. Horsiesios is also said to have written a series of instructions and a set of rules.⁷⁶ These are preserved in a number of codices ranging in date from the seventh to the eleventh century. Some authorities believe that the instructions are spurious. The style of the rules is more obviously literary than that of the Coptic rules attributed to Pachomius.⁷⁷ A final work, the so-called Testament of Horsiesios, is known only in a Latin translation.⁷⁸ This, like the other extant Latin versions of Pachomian writings, was made by Jerome near the beginning of the fifth century. Although no Coptic text of the work has survived, it is widely accepted as having been written by Horsiesios. Among other things, it sets out the responsibilities of monastic superiors to those in their charge and explains the duties of ordinary monks towards those who lead them. Two central themes of the Testament are the need for obedience and the evil of withholding one's property from the goods held in common by the community. This, it is known from other sources, caused serious problems for Horsiesios during the time when he was leader of the monks.⁷⁹

A further disciple and contemporary of Pachomius, Karour by name, is credited with an obscure work of prophetic character preserved in two manuscripts of the ninth century.⁸⁰ It is uncertain whether this attribution is correct. The earliest Coptic version of the Life of Pachomius occurs in a codex of sixth-century date. But it is widely believed that a form of this Life was in circulation a generation or two after Pachomius' death.⁸¹

The most important author of original literature in Coptic was the archimandrite Shenoute of Atripe (d. 466).⁸² In the course of his long life (over one hundred years), he wrote numerous letters, catecheses and sermons on

⁷¹ Lefort (1936a) xii-xvii and 37-62. ⁷² Krause (1981); Quecke (1975b).

⁷³ Boon (1932) 105-6. ⁷⁴ Lefort (1936a) xvii-xviii and 63-6. ⁷⁵ Orlandi (1981).

⁷⁶ Lefort (1936a) xviii-xxx and 66-79, 81-99. ⁷⁷ On this development, see Orlandi (1986) 60-3.

⁷⁸ Boon (1932) 109-47. ⁷⁹ Cf. Rousseau, *Pachomius* 157-8, 184-91.

⁸⁰ Lefort (1936a) xxx-xxxi and 100-4. Translation: *idem* (1936b) 100-8.

⁸¹ For the Coptic versions, see Lefort (1933b), *idem* (1925). On the relationship of these with the other versions, see Gochring (1986) 3-23, and literature cited there.

⁸² See Timbie (1986).

a range of subjects, including moral questions of all sorts, refutations of heretical doctrines, and condemnations of pagan beliefs and practices.⁸³ All of his works were composed in the Sa'idic dialect, in some cases tinged with Akhmimic.⁸⁴ With rare exceptions, Shenoute's writings cannot be dated precisely, or even to a specific period within his lifetime. Consequently, it is impossible to say how many of them were in circulation before the year 425, the end of the period under consideration, and how many were written afterwards.

The manuscripts which preserve Shenoute's literary output today were inscribed long after his death. In some cases, later scribes attributed works to him of which he was not the author. Fortunately, Shenoute's style is so distinctive that one can recognize such cases without much difficulty. Equally, it is possible to identify writings as his even when no author is named.⁸⁵ Shenoute's chief contribution to the development of Coptic literature lies in the fact that he was the first to apply the rules of Greek rhetoric to the production of original works in his native language.⁸⁶

The most important texts written by or about Egyptian monks that circulated in Coptic during the period that concerns us are those composed by Shenoute and by Pachomius and his followers. The contribution in this sphere made by other monastic figures is more difficult to assess. Antony (c. 251–356) is a case in point. Fragments of letters alleged to have been written by him are preserved in a Sa'idic MS. of the eleventh century.⁸⁷ However, it is not certain that they are actually his work. If they are, then was their original language Greek or Coptic? If the former, then uncertainty persists regarding the date of their translation.⁸⁸ One of the most valuable sources of information about monastic life in the fourth and fifth centuries is the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, a record of the wise sayings of the anchorites who inhabited the settlements of Nitria and Scetis. Although these may have circulated orally during the period under consideration, they were not collected in written form until after the middle of the fifth century, and then only in Greek. The extant Coptic translation must have been made at some point subsequent to that time.⁸⁹

Martyrologies are relatively rare in Coptic MSS. of early date.⁹⁰ Only a few have been preserved in codices written in the fourth or fifth centuries. A fragment of one is known from a Sa'idic manuscript written in the fifth

⁸³ For bibliography, see Frandsen and Richter-Aerøe (1981). ⁸⁴ Shisha-Halevy (1976).

⁸⁵ On the distinctive features of Shenoute's Coptic, see Shisha-Halevy (1991b) and literature cited there. For lists of genuine works by him, see Orlandi (1986) 66–9; Shisha-Halevy (1986) 215–20.

⁸⁶ Orlandi (1986) 64–70. On the character of Shenoute's writings, see also works cited by Krause (1980) columns 712–13; Shisha-Halevy (1986) 3–5.

⁸⁷ Garitte (1955) iv and 11–12, 20–2, 28–9, 41–6.

⁸⁸ Cf. Orlandi (1986) 63–4.

⁸⁹ See Orlandi (1970) 130–1 and references cited there.

⁹⁰ For those of later periods, the standard work is Baumeister (1972). See also Orlandi (1991a).

century.⁹¹ Unfortunately, the name of the martyr is lost. A Middle Egyptian text tentatively dated to the fourth century may be a further specimen of this genre.⁹² It describes conditions during the persecution instigated by Septimius Severus and how these were alleviated by a presbyter called John. The text, in its present form, ends abruptly. Originally, it may have served as the introduction to a longer work. It is clear from allusions in contemporary sources that other Coptic martyrologies must have been in circulation at the same time as these.⁹³ It is probable, however, that such texts were not very numerous. A recent study has drawn attention to the fact that martyrologies are relatively rare in Greek papyri of the fourth and fifth centuries as well.⁹⁴ It may be that the paucity of such works from this time reflects the influence of figures like Shenoute, who inveighed against the excessive veneration of martyrs.⁹⁵

V. THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY AND RELATED TRACTATES

The Nag Hammadi library is a group of thirteen Coptic codices discovered in 1945 at the Gebel el-Tarif near the city of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt. These were inscribed sometime around the middle of the fourth century. Two complete codices and part of a third are written in a form of Subakhmimic. The remainder are in Sa'idic. Each codex contains one or more tractates. There are fifty-two in total, including six that are duplicates. All are translations of Greek originals. These are chiefly, but not exclusively, gnostic in character.⁹⁶ Broadly speaking, the texts may be divided into five categories:

(i) *'Classical' or Sethian gnostic works.* This group of texts accords a place of great importance to Seth the son of Adam, as recipient and transmitter of divine revelation, as progenitor of a pure race of gnostic believers, and as saviour of those descended from him. Most of them presuppose an elaborate mythology in which the deity of the Old Testament appears as an evil demiurge.⁹⁷ A good example is the tractate titled the Apocalypse of Adam, which relates the history of mankind from the creation of Eve down to the incarnation of the Saviour and the ultimate triumph of Seth's posterity.⁹⁸ Related works include the Apocryphon of John,⁹⁹ the Hypostasis of the Archons,¹⁰⁰ and the Gospel of the Egyptians.¹⁰¹ Experts disagree over

⁹¹ Crum (1905) 416 (no. 1002). ⁹² Alcock (1982) 1-5, with plate 1. ⁹³ Cf. Horn (1986) 11-25.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 11 note 58. ⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 1-9.

⁹⁶ For the relevant literature, see Scholer (1971), with annual supplements in *Novum Testamentum* from 1971 onwards. The codices themselves are published in Robinson (1972-84) (12 volumes). A convenient collection of translations of the tractates is Robinson (1988).

⁹⁷ See Layton (1987) 5-22; Layton (ed.) (1981). ⁹⁸ Cf. MacRae (1979).

⁹⁹ To date, no critical edition of this work has been published; see Layton (1987) 23-51, with references to relevant literature. ¹⁰⁰ Cf. Bullard and Layton (1989).

¹⁰¹ Böhlig and Wisse (1975).

whether the texts in this category are the product of a single distinct school of gnostic thought, or the work of like-minded but unassociated individuals.¹⁰² Also disputed is the religious and cultural milieu in which they were written. Some think that they were composed in heterodox Christian circles; others ascribe to them a non-Christian, specifically Jewish, origin.¹⁰³

(ii) *Valentinian gnostic works.* This group comprises works written by the philosopher and theologian Valentinus (c. A.D. 100–75) and his followers. Valentinus offered an allegorical interpretation of gnostic mythology, making extensive use of New Testament terminology and concepts.¹⁰⁴ Among the Nag Hammadi tractates, the most important work in this category is the Gospel of Truth, which is widely accepted as a genuine writing of Valentinus himself. The text describes the process whereby the elect, through the gnosis imparted by God's son Jesus, are saved and reunited with him.¹⁰⁵ Other Valentinian works, or works with affinities to this school, preserved in the Nag Hammadi library include the Tripartite Tractate,¹⁰⁶ the Treatise on the Resurrection,¹⁰⁷ and the Gospel according to Philip.¹⁰⁸

(iii) *Works attributed to the apostle Thomas.* Two works of this type were found at Nag Hammadi: the Gospel according to Thomas¹⁰⁹ and the Book of Thomas.¹¹⁰ Both record sayings or revelations of Jesus said to have been transmitted by the apostle. In both, Thomas is described as the twin or double of Jesus. The texts stress the importance of gnosis for salvation, arguing that knowledge of oneself is the key to knowledge of God. However, there is some disagreement as to whether they are gnostic in the strict sense of the term. These works are believed to have originated among Christian ascetic communities in Mesopotamia.¹¹¹

(iv) *Hermetic works.* Three tractates belong to this category. They are inscribed consecutively in a single codex (no. VI). The works in question are the Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth, a dialogue in which Hermes Trismegistos instructs an initiate about the mysteries concerning the eighth and ninth spheres surrounding the earth, which are the realms of the divine,¹¹² a Prayer of Thanksgiving,¹¹³ and Asclepius, another dialogue recording revelations made by Hermes Trismegistos.¹¹⁴ The last two are known from Greek and Latin versions as well.¹¹⁵

¹⁰² See Wisse (1981) and Schenke (1981).

¹⁰³ For the former view, see Layton (1987) 20–1; for the latter, Pearson (1981).

¹⁰⁴ See Layton (1987) 267–75; Layton (ed.) (1980). ¹⁰⁵ Attridge and MacRae (1985).

¹⁰⁶ Attridge and Pagels (1985). ¹⁰⁷ Peel (1985).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Isenberg and Layton (1989).

¹⁰⁹ See Koester, Layton, Lambdin and Attridge (1989).

¹¹⁰ See Turner and Layton (1989). ¹¹¹ Layton (1987) 359–65.

¹¹² Dirkse, Brashler and Parrott (1979). ¹¹³ Dirkse and Brashler (1979).

¹¹⁴ Dirkse and Parrott (1979). ¹¹⁵ Cf. Mahé (1978–82).

(v) *Miscellaneous works.* In addition to those in the categories enumerated above, the Nag Hammadi library includes a variety of works of other types; some of these are gnostic, others are not. Among them are a crude rendering of a passage from Plato's *Republic*,¹¹⁶ the Sentences of Sextus, a collection of aphorisms also known in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic and Georgian versions;¹¹⁷ the Teachings of Silvanus, a similar collection of maxims and admonitions, portions of which were later attributed to Antony;¹¹⁸ and works like the Apocryphal Letter of James, which emphasizes the reality of Jesus' Passion and exhorts its audience to follow his example and seek martyrdom.¹¹⁹

It is still unclear who assembled the Nag Hammadi library and for what purpose.¹²⁰ It does seem certain, however, that the persons responsible regarded the collection of tractates as edifying reading matter. An earlier suggestion that the library may have been assembled by heresiologists for purposes of refutation is now regarded as untenable, since not all of its constituent texts are heretical. Another view, now discredited, is that the library was collected by monks in a nearby Pachomian monastery. This idea, with its implication that the religious beliefs of the said monks were of a heterodox nature, arose from a misinterpretation of several fragments of Greek papyri that were extracted from the bindings of the Nag Hammadi codices, in particular, Codex VII.¹²¹ Gnostic writings have, in fact, been discovered at monastic sites elsewhere in Egypt,¹²² but there is no evidence in these Greek fragments to connect the codices with any Pachomian foundation. It seems simplest to assume that the library was assembled by a group of gnostic believers. The presence in it of non-gnostic material is explicable on the grounds that the compilers found this to be congenial to their own point of view, either as read literally or interpreted as allegory.

The gnostic tractates discovered at Nag Hammadi are not the only works of this sort that have been preserved in Coptic. Apart from a number of fragments,¹²³ there are three further MSS. of particular importance. P. Berolinensis 8502, a Sa'idic codex written in the fifth century, contains four tractates: the Gospel of Mary, the Apocryphon of John, the Sophia of Jesus Christ and the Acts of Peter.¹²⁴ The second and third of these occur in the Nag Hammadi library as well. The fourth tractate is not a gnostic work as such, but is susceptible to gnostic interpretation and was probably included with the other three for that reason.

¹¹⁶ Brashler (1979). ¹¹⁷ Poirier and Painchaud (1983) 12-94.

¹¹⁸ Janssens (1983); cf. Funk (1976). ¹¹⁹ Williams (1985).

¹²⁰ For a survey of recent research on this subject, see Veilleux (1986).

¹²¹ Veilleux (1986) 278-83. ¹²² Cf. Kahle (1954) 1, 473-7.

¹²³ Kahle, *loc. cit.*; Layton (1989). ¹²⁴ Till and Schenke (1972).

The Askew Codex, a Sa'idic manuscript of fourth- or fifth-century date, contains a single work, the Pistis Sophia, divided into four books.¹²⁵ This purports to be a record of revelations made by the risen Jesus to his disciples concerning the entity mentioned in the title. The last MS. is the Bruce Codex, actually two separate Sa'idic codices bound together, one of fourth- or fifth-century date, the other certainly written in the fifth century.¹²⁶ The first of these preserves the Books of Jeu, further gnostic revelations made by Jesus to his disciples. The Jeu of the title, also designated as the true god, is a being who acts to produce emanations of himself under the influence of Jesus' father. These are described in both words and diagrams. The second tractate is of the same type as those works enumerated above under the rubric of 'classical' or Sethian gnosticism.

VI. MANICHEAN WRITINGS

In 1929, several codices written in a form of Subakhmimic Coptic were discovered at Medinet Madi near the Fayyum.¹²⁷ All proved to be inscribed with Manichean works. None of them was written originally in Coptic; either they were translated directly from Aramaic (Syriac), or from Greek versions of originals in that language.¹²⁸ Estimates of the date of these codices have ranged from the fourth to the fifth century.¹²⁹ Soon after their discovery, they were divided up and sold to three different collectors. The bulk of them are now in Dublin and Berlin. Parts of some of the codices which went to Berlin after their purchase were subsequently lost in the aftermath of the Second World War. Several of the texts are still unpublished or only partially published. The contents of the collection are as follows:

(i) Berlin Codex P. 15995. This MS. preserves a commentary on the Living Gospel, one of the seven canonical works written by Mani.¹³⁰

(ii) Berlin Codex P. 15996. This contains the Kephalaia, or Chapters, of the Master, a compendious account of Manichean doctrine. Each chapter is presented in the form of a discourse of Mani with his disciples.¹³¹

(iii) Berlin Codex P. 15997. This originally preserved an account of Mani's life and the history of the Manichean sect. Unfortunately, all but nine leaves of it were lost in the aftermath of the war.¹³²

¹²⁵ Schmidt (1978a). ¹²⁶ Schmidt (1978b).

¹²⁷ See Schmidt and Polotsky (1933), especially 7-10; Giversen (1988a) vii-viii.

¹²⁸ Cf. Nagel (1971) 347 note 63; *idem* (1981).

¹²⁹ Schmidt in Schmidt and Polotsky (1933) 35; Polotsky (1934) x note 1.

¹³⁰ Böhlig (1968) 185, 222-7. Cf. Beltz (1978) 97.

¹³¹ Polotsky and Böhlig (1940); Böhlig (1966). Cf. *idem* (1968) 182-3, 228-66; Beltz (1978) 97-8. For additional fragments of the same MS. in Vienna, see Gardner (1988) 53-5.

¹³² Böhlig (1968) 183-4; Beltz (1978) 98.

(iv) Berlin Codex P. 15998. This MS., of which all but twenty-eight leaves have been lost, contains a collection of letters written by Mani.¹³³

(v) Berlin Codex P. 15999. This MS. was lost before it could be studied properly. The results of a cursory examination made prior to its disappearance suggest that it may have been a collection of sayings (*logoi*) of Mani's followers.¹³⁴

(vi) Chester Beatty Codex A. Psalms used in the Manichean liturgy make up the contents of this MS. These are of several varieties, including psalms attributed to Mani's disciples Thomas and Heracleides, and those used in the feast of the *bema* or tribunal, which commemorated Mani's death.¹³⁵

(vii) Chester Beatty Codex B. The contents of this MS. have yet to be identified.¹³⁶

(viii) Chester Beatty Codex C. This text contains further *kephalaia*, or chapters, setting out Manichean doctrines.¹³⁷ There is disagreement among experts as to whether the entire codex is devoted to these or whether its latter part is actually a distinct work which has yet to be identified.¹³⁸ Also disputed is the nature of the relationship of the Chester Beatty *kephalaia* with those preserved in Berlin Codex P. 15996. The latter have been ascribed to Mani himself; the former may be the teachings of one of his followers.¹³⁹

(ix) A further codex in the Chester Beatty collection preserves homilies composed by disciples of Mani.¹⁴⁰ The suggestion has been made that this and the now lost Berlin P. 15999 may originally have been parts of the same manuscript.¹⁴¹

(x) A single leaf in the same collection is inscribed with what appears to be a historical text.¹⁴² This may be a fragment of the work partially preserved in Berlin Codex P. 15997.¹⁴³

The Coptic texts from Medinet Madi are among the most important Manichean documents yet discovered, chiefly because of their early date. They shed valuable light on the rites and beliefs of this sect during the first century of its existence. The full value of the MSS. will only become apparent when the entire collection has been published and studied. It is to be hoped, for example, that the commentary on the Living Gospel will provide important information about that work, of which only fragments are now extant.¹⁴⁴

¹³³ Description as *per* Böhlig (1968) 184. According to Beltz, *loc. cit.*, only eight leaves of the MS. survive. ¹³⁴ Böhlig, *loc. cit.*

¹³⁵ Giversen (1988a and b); Allberry (1938). Cf. Böhlig (1968) 185; Orlandi (1976) 324.

¹³⁶ Giversen (1986b) plates 101-26; Böhlig (1968) 186-7; Orlandi (1976) 324-5.

¹³⁷ Giversen (1986a). Cf. Böhlig (1968) 185; Orlandi (1976) 324-5.

¹³⁸ Cf. Giversen (1986a) xxi; Orlandi (1976) 325. ¹³⁹ Cf. Giversen (1986a) xix.

¹⁴⁰ Polotsky (1934); Giversen (1986b) plates 1-98. ¹⁴¹ Böhlig (1968) 185-6.

¹⁴² Giversen (1986b) plates 99-100. ¹⁴³ Cf. Giversen (1986b) viii-ix; Sundermann (1988) 570.

¹⁴⁴ For these, see Böhlig (1968) 227.

More recently, in 1991–2, additional Manichean texts in Coptic, Greek and Syriac were discovered at the site of Ismant el-Kharab in the Dakhleh Oasis. They were found in a house of which the period of occupation is said to extend from the late third to the late fourth century. Some are bilingual (Coptic–Syriac). At least a few preserve parallel versions of psalms previously known from Chester Beatty Codex A. This material is currently being prepared for publication. It too should add a great deal to our knowledge of early Manicheism in Egypt.¹⁴⁵

One of the most striking aspects of Coptic literature of the fourth and fifth centuries, including the period 337–425, is its great diversity. As well as biblical, patristic and other categories of text which continued to be read in subsequent periods, it encompasses gnostic, hermetic, and Manichean works, of which no later specimens are known in Coptic. Its diversity is also apparent in the variety of dialects in which it is written. Throughout the period under consideration, Sa'idic was the most important literary dialect. But one is struck by the relatively large number of texts written in Subakhmimic and Akhmimic, particularly in the fourth century. Subakhmimic had special significance as a vehicle for the transmission of heterodox works like those written by the gnostics and Manicheans.

Overall, the fourth and fifth centuries were the most important period in the history of Coptic literature. They witnessed the translation of the entire Bible into Coptic, which did much to accelerate the spread of Christianity in Egypt. They also saw the widest circulation, in that language, of works of gnostic and Manichean origin, sects which posed a major challenge to Christianity. Thus, during the fourth and fifth centuries, Coptic texts provided a further forum for a crucial and ongoing debate. But Coptic literature in these years did not consist solely of translations from other tongues. It was during the fourth and fifth centuries that the first attempts were made to produce original literature in Coptic. These were to culminate in the work of Shenoute, who successfully adapted Greek literary traditions in the process of forging a Coptic prose style that was at once both fresh and vigorous. Innovators like him established the foundations on which all future Coptic authors were to build.

¹⁴⁵ For an overview of the Ismant el-Kharab discoveries, see Gardner (1993).

CHAPTER 24

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

JAS ELSNER

I. INTRODUCTION

The art of late antiquity embodies one of the great transitions in the history of western art. It marks the first time after the fifth century B.C. when the classical canons of Graeco-Roman forms shifted, over the whole spectrum of the representational arts, towards the less naturalistic and more abstract forms which scholars have held to be characteristic of the art of the Middle Ages. This change is marked by an apparent paradox: the juxtaposition of religious elements (pagan and Christian) and stylistic forms (naturalist and schematic) which normally we might expect to be separate and even antipathetic. The syncretisms of fourth-century art and architecture have been regarded as the visual embodiment of an intellectual and cultural process whose eventual result would be the emergence of Byzantine and Latin Christian culture. This view, which sees the importance of fourth-century art to be its teleological relation to later art, is certainly valid; but perhaps it fails to give due regard to the intrinsic interest of the visual culture of late antiquity.

The fourth and fifth centuries saw the continuation of the great traditions of classical art and architecture as they had been practised for several centuries throughout the Roman empire. At the same time, these traditions were transformed into new, more 'abstract' styles set in a very different religious context. In the period with which this volume deals, A.D. 337–425, colossal statues were still being cast in the tradition of ancient imperial bronzes. Examples include the great bronze of Constantius II (emperor 337–61), now in the Museo dei Conservatori in Rome, and the large fifth-century statue brought by the Venetians to Barletta in the Middle Ages.¹ Imperial statues in marble continued to be made, such as the magnificent Theodosian portraits discovered in Istanbul and Aphrodisias.² Triumphal columns were still erected by the emperors; those of Theodosius I (set up

¹ On the late bronzes see Kluge and Lehmann-Hartleben (1927) 11, 53–8. On tradition and innovation in late antique sculpture generally, see Hannestad (1994).

² On the Istanbul image see Küsterich (1993) 87–9, with bibliography; on the Aphrodisias statue, see *ibid.* 27–30, with bibliography.

in Constantinople in the late 380s) and of Arcadius (erected after 401),³ emulate the celebrated Roman columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. Imperial arches, like those of Titus in Rome or Trajan at Beneventum, continued to be built; fragments have been found, for instance, of an Arch of Theodosius in Constantinople. Obelisks continued to be raised by the emperors in the tradition of Augustus – like that of Constantius II, set up in the Circus Maximus in 357. A rare fourth-century survival is the base of the obelisk of Theodosius, erected in the Hippodrome in Constantinople in 390, whose four sides represent the emperor at the centre of his state activities.⁴ Cameos, such as the Belgrade fragment showing a rider in battle or the sardonix gem now in Paris probably representing Honorius and his wife Maria (married in 398), continued to be cut, emulating the lavish gems of the earlier empire.⁵ Great basilical churches were built, whose forms and techniques looked back to masterpieces of Roman architectural brickwork like the Pantheon, the Macellum of Trajan and the Baths of Caracalla in Rome.⁶ Many of these fourth-century monuments or objects do not survive today and are known only from late drawings and engravings. But their existence indicates the continuance of the traditions of imperial patronage and self-advertisement through art which had been so signally established by Augustus' transformation of Rome.

Critics have often seen such continuities with tradition in late antique art as a mark of decline. Fewer monuments and objects appear to have been produced in the traditional media – imperial statues, for instance. And their workmanship has been described as cruder. But there is considerable danger in looking at any one medium in isolation. While fewer large-scale sculptures were produced, late antique artists were making considerable quantities of high-quality ivory reliefs – miniature sculptures, but masterpieces none the less.⁷ The decline in the quantity and even quality of large-scale sculpture may represent a transference of taste and patronage to different media rather than any absolute or outright degeneration of quality or skill.

At the same time, the fourth and early fifth centuries saw the entry of a number of innovations into the artistic repertoire of the empire in response to the new patronage of the church and the continued patronage of the aristocracy. These included such features as the expanded use of sumptuous *opus sectile* panels of inlaid coloured marbles to decorate the walls of wealthier edifices; examples are in the secular basilica of Junius

³ On the columns of Theodosius and Arcadius, see Küllerich (1993) 50–64, with further bibliography 50, n. 157.

⁴ On the Theodosian obelisk base, see Küllerich (1993) 31–49, with bibliography 31, n. 91.

⁵ On the Rothschild Cameo of Honorius, see Küllerich (1993) 92–4, with bibliography.

⁶ On the origins of the Christian basilica, see Ward-Perkins (1954) and Krautheimer (1967).

⁷ For a survey of early ivories, see Küllerich (1993) 136–59.

Bassus, consul 331, from the Esquiline in Rome,⁸ and the arcade of the church of S. Sabina on the Aventine, built in the first half of the fifth century.⁹ Figurative mosaics were introduced into the walls and vaults of buildings as well as their floors – for instance, in the mid-fourth-century mausolea of S. Costanza in Rome and Centelles in Spain. Illumination was developed to illustrate the new kind of book (vellum codex rather than papyrus roll) which became predominant in the centuries after the birth of Christ;¹⁰ the only early-fifth-century illuminated manuscripts surviving are the Vatican Virgil and the fragmentary Itala of Quedlinburg now in Berlin, which contains Old Testament texts.¹¹ On a more domestic level, the fourth century marked the high point in the production of lavish luxury tableware, which reached a complexity and sophistication that has rarely been equalled since.¹² Magnificent late antique collections of silver and silver-gilt (such as the Sevso Treasure in the collection of the Marquess of Northampton,¹³ or the stylistically related Kaiseraugst Treasure in Basel)¹⁴ were offset on aristocratic dining-tables by such elaborate objects as cage-cups, whose glass was often cast in several colours and undercut flamboyantly in deep relief (for example, the Lycurgus cup in the British Museum),¹⁵ or stone vases carved in high relief (like the Rubens vase now in Baltimore).¹⁶

Both the changes and the continuities in the art and architecture of the upper levels of society, in the public and private spheres, indicate the wealth and artistic vitality of the empire after the death of Constantine. His successors continued his extensive building projects in Rome, in the Holy Land and in Constantinople, the city that Constantine founded in 330 but did not live to see completed.¹⁷ The continuity with the patterns of patronage in the classical past was coupled with the novel process of Christianization. Now, instead of temples, the emperors were building churches. In the city of Rome, at any rate, Christianization had a striking topographic effect. Whereas the ancient temples had been in the centre of the city, the greatest of the new churches were established on its peripheries, near the burial sites of the martyrs. Constantine had built St Peter's on the Vatican hill outside the city walls, the Lateran Basilica just inside the walls, and S. Agnese fuori le Mura, S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura,

⁸ On the Basilica of Junius Bassus, see Becatti (1969) 181–215.

⁹ On S. Sabina, see Krautheimer (1937–77) IV, 72–98.

¹⁰ See on illumination and the early codex, Weitzmann (1959); Weitzmann (1970); Roberts and Skeat (1983). ¹¹ For the Vatican Virgil, see Wright (1993); and for the Quedlinburg Itala see Levin (1985).

¹² For an introduction to late antique silver, see Kent and Painter (1977) 15–76.

¹³ For an introduction to the Sevso Treasure, see Mango and Bennett (1994).

¹⁴ On the Kaiseraugst Treasure, see Cahn and Kauffman-Heinimann (1984).

¹⁵ On cage-cups, see Harden (1987) 238–58; and on the Lycurgus cup, *ibid.* 245–9, with bibliography p. 249. ¹⁶ For the Rubens vase, see Weitzmann (1979) 333–4, with bibliography p. 334.

¹⁷ For a brief survey of Christian architecture in the capitals, see Krautheimer, *Architecture* 45–65.

SS. Marcellino e Pietro and S. Sebastiano all outside the walls. His successors completed these projects and built S. Croce in Gerusalemme just within the walls of Rome and the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls.¹⁸ In an age remarkable for its public liturgical processions and urban rituals, the effect of placing such a formidable number of great imperial churches on the periphery of Rome should not be underrated.¹⁹ The new Christian context for artistic patronage created profound changes in the effects of architecture on the environment and experience of the city's inhabitants. Rome, the ancient capital, was rather exceptional in this respect, since the relics of the earliest Christians and martyrs were situated in the graveyards outside and around the city.²⁰ The peripheral nature of Rome's sacred topography is not emulated in Constantinople or Ravenna, where the patterns of early Christian burial appear to have been different.²¹

Such Christian buildings and monuments became a primary vehicle for the process of Christianization. They constituted the space of Christianity. Churches were built specifically in response to the demands of Christian pilgrims – not only the great campaign of Constantinian churches in Palestine, but also numerous martyria and relic-centres the length and breadth of the empire. At the lower end of the social scale, Christians were not the only religious group to be decorating catacombs, shrines and sacred objects with a wealth of symbolic images which proclaimed their holiness. Jews, followers of the cult of Mithras and initiates in other cults both 'pagan' and 'syncretistic' (soon to be persecuted by the victorious Christians) were equally busy in an age which should be seen as a high point of religious imagery and sensibility.

II. THE MODERN CRITICAL CONTEXT

The art of the fourth century has been studied principally in two ways. One has its roots in the Renaissance and Enlightenment diatribes against the 'decline' and 'degeneracy' supposedly visible in the Arch of Constantine, which juxtaposes fourth-century with second-century imperial relief sculpture. This approach sees the art of the Christian empire as embodying a marked stylistic and formal decline from the apex of classical naturalism

¹⁸ On Rome, see Krautheimer, *Rome* 3–58; *idem* (1983) 7–40; Ward-Perkins, *Public Building* 38–48, 51–9 and esp. 236–41.

¹⁹ On urban ritual in Rome, Jerusalem and Constantinople, see Baldovin (1987).

²⁰ Milan, however, also follows a largely peripheral pattern; see Krautheimer (1983) 68–92 and Monfrin (1991).

²¹ On the topography of Constantinople, see Krautheimer (1983) 41–67 and Mango (1985) 23–50; on Ravenna, see Ward-Perkins, *Public Building* 51–83, 241–4 and esp. Deichmann (1989); on the cities of the eastern empire, see Mango (1974) 30–57.

towards the Dark Ages.²² It interprets the difference between 'naturalistic' and 'abstractionist' styles as being of essential importance.²³ More recently, this view has been refined in a number of directions which do not necessarily or explicitly imply 'decline'. Some have argued, for instance, that the emergence of non-naturalistic styles in the fourth century shows a healthy return to the expressionism long present in Roman art and culture, and only suppressed by the overlay of Greek influence.²⁴ The end of naturalism is thus interpreted as a response to contemporary needs and social change.²⁵ All such approaches have a formalist slant in taking their starting-point from exploring the differences that emerge between fourth-century and classical art in a period of crucial change.

The second method of interpretation, concerned less explicitly with form and more with the content and subject matter of images, has seen the art of the fourth century as the cradle for that of the Middle Ages, and in particular for Christian art. This approach focuses more on the continuities between many of the developments in fourth-century art and the medieval Christian future.²⁶ It observes the breadth of influences on early Christian art, such as the more schematic arts of the Near Eastern provinces of the empire (for example, that of Palmyra),²⁷ the near-contemporary Jewish images of Dura Europos,²⁸ even the effects of competition with pagan, Jewish and Manichean art.²⁹ In this way, the history of images has been tied to the history of Christianization, of supposed pagan revivals and of the settings of early Christian liturgy, such as house-churches and catacombs. More intellectualist versions of this approach have tied the development of late antique 'abstraction' to changes in philosophical, cultural and literary fashions in late paganism and early Christianity.³⁰

A third approach has been to blend the two already mentioned, appropriating the 'decline' to a formalist art history of the styles of the early Middle Ages.³¹ All the lines sketched above share several assumptions which are worth making explicit. They see their task as interpreting only those images which were produced in the period under discussion, rather

²² The traditional model of 'decline' is expressed most forcefully and succinctly by Berenson (1934). See also the discussion of Trilling (1987). Note, however, that as early as 1901, Riegl was mounting a powerful argument against the prevailing view of late Roman art as 'decay' in favour of 'progress'; see Riegl (1985) 11–13 and 54–7 on the Arch of Constantine.

²³ Hence, for instance, Rodenwaldt's espousal of 'transcendentalism' or 'expressionism' as formulations for what he none the less sees as a form of decline, in Rodenwaldt (1939) 563–7.

²⁴ Most notably Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome* and (1979) 181–223. ²⁵ See L'Orange (1965).

²⁶ See, for instance, Grabar (1969).

²⁷ An approach pioneered by Stzrygowski (1923) 1–46; and upheld by Kitzinger (1940) 8f. and Grabar (1972). See the discussion of Trilling (1987). ²⁸ See Weitzmann and Kessler (1990).

²⁹ Suggested by Grabar (1969) 23–30.

³⁰ On the philosophical influence of Plotinian thought, see Grabar (1967) 288–91 and Walter (1984) 271–6; on literature and imagination, see Onians (1980) and Roberts (1989) 66–121; on magic, see Mathews (1993) 54–91. ³¹ See Kitzinger (1977).

than including art made in the past but which was still present in the fourth century or even re-used during it. This is why the critical attack on the Arch of Constantine has not seen the re-use of second-century reliefs as a creative or innovatory way of using images to relate with the past. Art historians have tended not to imagine that re-used second-century sculptures might have an entirely fresh meaning in their new fourth-century context.

Linked with this assumption that the meaning of art is static and frozen in the moment of its production are a number of further reductive expectations. Images with Christian themes are believed straightforwardly to provide positive and factual evidence for the Christianity of the artist or the patron or both. Likewise with pagan and Jewish iconography. Hence single images are presumed to have single meanings which the scholar can simply identify. However, this represents what the anthropologist Ernest Gellner describes as 'the failure to appreciate something which is a commonplace in sociology . . . the difference between single-strand or single-purpose activities, on the one hand, and multi-strand activities on the other. A multi-strand activity [the use of images, in this case], which serves multiple criteria or ends, is treated as if it were a single-strand one.'³² In other words, the assumption that an image of, say, the sacrifice of Isaac must indicate Christian patrons or artists, is not warranted. On the contrary, it may be a product of Jews, or of pagans drawing syncretistically on Judaeo-Christian mythology. The point is that such an image may have meaning for viewers of all these sects and denominations, no matter who made it or commissioned it.

The approach to fourth- and early-fifth-century art outlined below takes a number of slightly different assumptions from those outlined above as its basis. Changes in style may imply changes in taste, but certainly need not be seen as indices of decline. There is no reason to privilege classical naturalism as in any way a superior regime of representation to any other abstract, schematic or non-naturalist mode. Images are visual symbols which may have a multiplicity of meanings and evocations for different viewers, both at the time they were made and thereafter. In treating of late antiquity, we must look to the whole span of images and monuments, both those surviving into and those created by that period. The meanings of such images may be not only multiple but even contradictory, with different viewers potentially believing different things about the same work of art. Furthermore, an investigation of art and architecture must be sensitive to the different social and cultural levels at which material culture may function. A box used in a liturgical ceremony carries different symbolic evocations from the same object used to hold food in a dinner-party or cosmetics in a toilet set.

³² Gellner (1988) 42–3, cf. 42–9, 50–3 and 77–9.

Accounts of late antique art have tended to adopt a chronological focus, looking either at the decline of naturalism or the emergence of Christian art, or a topographic approach, looking at developments in the Roman empire province by province, or else have concentrated on style. What follows is, by contrast, a synchronic and thematic approach to topics which are of prime interest to the historian in the art of the fourth and early fifth centuries. This approach is thus biased towards a historical assessment of the contribution of art to understanding the history of the period rather than a strictly art-historical exploration of the forms and styles of monuments.

III. ART AND ARCHITECTURE, 337-425

1. *Late antiquity and its past*

Describing the entry of Constantine's son Constantius into the city of Rome in A.D. 357, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus writes (xvi.10.13f.):

He stood amazed; and on every side on which his eyes rested he was dazzled by the array of marvellous sights . . . As he surveyed the sections of the city and its suburbs . . . he thought that whatever met his gaze first towered over all the rest: the sanctuaries of Tarpeian Jove so far surpassing as things divine excel those of the earth; the baths built up to the measure of provinces; the huge bulk of the amphitheatre, strengthened by its framework of Tiburtine stone, to whose top human eyesight barely ascends; the Pantheon like a rounded city district, vaulted over in lofty beauty; and the exalted heights which rise with platforms to which one may mount, and bear the likenesses of emperors [i.e. the columns]; the Temple of the City, the Forum of Peace, the theatre of Pompey, the Odeum, the Stadium, and amongst these the other adornments of the Eternal City. But when he came to the Forum of Trajan, a construction unique under the heavens, as we believe, and admirable even in the unanimous opinion of all the gods, he stood fast in amazement, turning his attention to the gigantic complex about him, begging description and never again to be imitated by mortal men.

(Trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb edn)

This passage from Ammianus is testimony to the extraordinary respect accorded by Romans of late antiquity to the monumental remains of their ancient past.³³ No account of the art of the period can be complete without grounding the developments of the fourth and fifth centuries in this context of near-reverence. It may be objected that Ammianus was a pagan apologist, naturally biased towards the 'sanctuaries of Tarpeian Jove', but in fact Christians and Christian emperors were as enthusiastic about ancient monuments as was their historian in his rhetoric. Constantine and his successors crammed not only the old Rome, but also

³³ On ancient statues in late antique Rome, see Curran (1994).

Constantinople, the new Christian Rome, with famous pagan statues culled from the great sites of Greece and Italy.

It is revealing that even at the height of Christian polemic against paganism, even after the prohibition on pagan sacrifices enacted by Theodosius the Great in 391, the sacrificial representations abounding on Rome's monuments were not attacked or destroyed. The relics of the ancient past were allowed to remain, both as testimony to the ancestry of the modern state and as a mark of the difference created by the new Christian dispensation.

The scenes of sacrifice on the arches, on the columns, on the bases of statues and obelisks, represent the kind of ritual which occasions fervent polemic in the majority of our early Christian written sources. If we believe the evidence of such texts to be providing a true sense of attitudes after Constantine's establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the empire, these are the kinds of images which should have been destroyed under the new Christian dispensation. And yet such monuments survive in copious numbers from the ancient buildings of Rome to this day. At no stage were they considered sufficiently offensive to be damaged, whatever the evidence of the more polemical writers might urge us to suppose.

The Arch of Constantine was held by Romans through the fourth and fifth centuries to commemorate a Christian emperor, despite its use of pagan sacrificial scenes and carvings. Another celebrated work of art, explicitly associated with a family of leading pagan aristocrats, is the Symmachorum leaf of an ivory diptych from the late fourth century, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.³⁴ It depicts a pagan priestess before an altar under an oak tree. She scatters incense over a small fire, and is accompanied by an attendant holding a bowl of fruit and a *kantharos*. Yet this object with an explicitly pagan theme could well have been made after the Theodosian prohibition against pagan sacrifices in 391. Even during the ascendancy of Christianity, classicizing images not only survived on ancient monuments but were produced. There is no need to resort to theories of a 'pagan' revival in the late fourth century to explain such objects. Rather, they were a natural part of a society which did not necessarily see its classical past (pagan religious associations and all) in direct conflict with its Christian present and future.

The case of Constantinople is still more remarkable than that of Rome. Constantine and his successors appear to have packed the new capital not merely with ancient statues but specifically with some of the most celebrated (and hence execrated) pagan idols. Eighty statues, most of bronze, were gathered into the Baths of Zeuxippos in the city centre and a

³⁴ For a brief and recent discussion of the Symmachorum leaf, with bibliography, see Küllerich (1993) 144-9.

sumptuous collection of antique masterpieces, including Phidias' chryselephantine Zeus from Olympia and the Cnidian Aphrodite of Praxiteles, found its way into the Palace of Lausus in the reign of Theodosius II (406–50). This Aphrodite, we may note, had been the subject of polemic from such Christian writers as Arnobius and Clement of Alexandria.³⁵

To Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea and Constantine's biographer, the adornment of the city with ancient idols was embarrassing. He wrote in the *Vita Constantini* (III.54):

Venerable statues of brass . . . were exposed to view in all the public places of the imperial city: so that here a Pythian, there a Sminthian Apollo excited the contempt of the beholder: while Delphic tripods were deposited in the Hippodrome and the Muses of Helicon in the palace. In short the city which bore his name was everywhere filled with brazen statues of the most exquisite workmanship, which had been dedicated in every province, and which the deluded victims of superstition had long vainly honoured as gods with numberless victims and burnt sacrifices, though now at length they learnt to renounce their error, when the emperor held up these very playthings to be the ridicule and sport of all beholders.

(Trans. E. C. Richardson, Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers)

The visual evidence spoke for itself, announcing the high prestige of ancient art and the new capital's need to ground itself in the imperialist acquisition of the splendours of the Greek past. But the Christian apologist needs to explain these images away as idols no longer worshipped because their very display has made them despised. In brief, art and literature provide us with rather different pictures of cultural and religious attitudes.

2. *The problems of syncretism: what is Christian art?*

This passage from a Christian bishop raises an important point about the difference between texts and images (at least in this period) as methods for disseminating meaning. Religious writing in late antiquity tends to establish self-definition by explicit contrast and polemic (one thinks of Christian diatribes against heretics and pagans as well as the pagan attacks of Celsus, Porphyry and Julian against the Christians). Religious images, by contrast, appear to announce themselves transparently and straightforwardly as themselves, with little commentary about other or rival programmes of pictures. There may in fact be an implicit polemical commentary, as in a recently discovered fourth-century pagan mosaic from the House of Aion, Nea Paphos, in Cyprus, depicting Hermes seated with the infant Dionysus

³⁵ For the re-use of antiquities in Constantinople, see Mango (1963) 57–9, and in general: Dawkins (1924); Saradi-Mendelovici (1990); Bassett (1991); Madden (1992).

(who has a halo) on his lap.³⁶ This image seems remarkably like Christian representations of the Virgin and Child: whether it represents a peculiar instance of Dionysiac-Christian syncretism or a deliberately anti-Christian Dionysiac use of Christian iconography, we may never know. Usually such images are only implicitly polemical; they do not explicitly state the object of attack or parody.

Christian apologetic texts which were keen to integrate Christianity into the cultural climate of antiquity nevertheless regularly presented the pagan past as at best a pale foreshadowing of the new dispensation. Like the Old Testament, the wisdom of the ancients looked forward to and could only be fulfilled by the incarnation. The extreme Christian polemicists were significantly more brutal about the pagan past. But the visual evidence shows almost no signs of these attitudes. On the contrary, pagan statues remained in the centre of Rome and were placed in prime sites in other cities of the empire like Constantinople; pagan motifs were adopted by and adapted into Christian art, and pagan themes stood side by side with Christian ones throughout the art of the fourth century.

The quality by which an image seemed straightforwardly to stand for itself allowed people to put together several apparently unconnected images to create a new, more complex, work of art. The result was a kind of syncretism or accretion of images which needed to be read through their symbolic connections. Marked accretion is a particular feature of late antique art. This is so not only in the conflations of Christian and pagan themes upon which so much of the scholarship on fourth- and fifth-century art has concentrated, but also in imperial imagery and in the art of the initiate cults. In imperial art, in the bricolage of the Arch of Constantine, original fourth-century sculptures made specifically for the Arch were brought together with earlier second-century reliefs taken as *spolia* from elsewhere.³⁷ Such a juxtaposition tended to prompt viewers into seeing the emperor directly in the context of his glorious predecessors. His present became a fulfilment of their past, while the activities in which they were represented (hunting, addressing the troops, performing sacrifice and so forth) became a distant prefiguring of the triumphant present. In religious art, the *tauroctony* – the complex image which occupied the cult niche in Mithraic temples and represented the god Mithras killing a bull – blended sacrificial, astrological and biographical information into one coherent image.³⁸ The high sophistication of the masterpieces of early Christian art, such as the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus in Rome³⁹ or the ivory reliquary

³⁶ On the images from the House of Aion see Daszewski (1985). For a brief discussion of the pagan-Christian issues, see Bowersock *Hellenism* 49–53.

³⁷ On the Arch of Constantine, see Pierce (1989) with bibliography. On *spolia*, see e.g. Brenk (1987).

³⁸ On the *tauroctony*, see Elsner (1995) 210–21.

³⁹ On the Junius Bassus Sarcophagus, see Malbon (1990), with earlier bibliography.

box known as a *lipsanoteca* from Brescia,⁴⁰ with their complex juxtapositions of Old and New Testament themes according to the tenets of patristic typology, represented a Christian artistic appropriation of patterns of syncretism already common in the art and writing of late antiquity.

The patterns of pagan-Christian syncretism, which are a particular feature of fourth-century imagery, are part of the same phenomenon. A pagan text may be inscribed beside a Christian image; for example, there is gem depicting Orpheus crucified which may have been used as a mystic token or emblem.⁴¹ Likewise, a Christian invocation can be written on a pagan representation, as on the celebrated Projecta casket from a collection of treasure discovered on the Esquiline.⁴² Here a scene of the Toilet of Venus has inscribed below it SECUNDE ET PROJECTA VIVATIS IN CHRISTO ('Secundus and Projecta, may you live in Christ'). Again, pagan and Christian images can stand side by side; an example is the mosaic showing Bellerophon and what is probably a portrait of Christ on the fourth-century Hinton St Mary floor in the British Museum.⁴³ Such pictures combine to create a new scene which excludes neither pagan nor Christian themes. In other words, while Christian texts of the period tend to argue for exclusion (of pagans, of heretics, of illicit practices), the images, by contrast, suggest a culture of inclusion.

The implications of syncretism are very deep. What happens when one religious group borrows other groups' motifs, when Christians use Dionysiac vine scrolls, for instance, which they do ubiquitously on art objects from all social levels and areas – from Roman catacombs to Coptic textiles? Such conflations and borrowings ought to prompt questions which are all too rarely asked in the literature: what makes art Christian? How can we define Christian art?

It has generally been assumed that Christian art is simply art with a Christian text or iconography. Syncretistic combinations, like those we have glanced at just now, tend to be seen as odd and out of line with an ideal of straightforwardly orthodox Christian iconography. But did such an ideal exist in the fourth century? Indeed, was there, in the half-century after the council of Nicaea, a single Christianity which agreed on what was and what was not orthodox iconography? The extraordinarily fractious history of the next few centuries of theological dispute suggests the Christians could not agree on what their most cherished doctrines and dogmas were. When the Fathers of the church worried deeply about the very language they should use in describing the relations of the Trinity,⁴⁴ why should we

⁴⁰ On the Brescia Casket, see Watson (1981), with earlier bibliography.

⁴¹ On this syncretistic gem, see Cabrol and Leclercq (1936) vol. 12, p. 2754, fig. 9249. But is it a fake?

⁴² On the Esquiline Treasure, see Shelton (1981), and specifically on the Projecta Casket, pp. 72–5.

⁴³ On the Hinton St Mary floor, see Toynbee (1964).

⁴⁴ On language and the Holy Trinity, see e.g. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 1–8, 25–9.

assume there to be any consensus on orthodox imagery? One objection to the approach which so transparently connects Christian iconography with a straightforward and ideal version of Christianity and pagan iconography with some analogous version of paganism is just that it is unhelpfully reductivist. It fails Christian art by applying the exclusiveness we find in texts to a medium which favours inclusion; moreover, it fails to explain both syncretistic juxtapositions and those themes which we might have assumed were straightforwardly pagan.

Let us return to Projecta. A number of spectacular silver items were discovered in the Esquiline Treasure, all apparently part of one set of cosmetic and toiletry paraphernalia and apparently made by the same workshop, probably in the fourth century. The Projecta casket now in the British Museum is the most famous object, because of its inscription. But the iconography is unashamedly pagan and secular – a procession to the baths, a woman (Projecta herself?) at her toilet with servants, the toilet of Venus (who is represented nude on a shell in between sea monsters and erotes), nereids and, on the lid, what appears to be a marriage portrait of Secundus and Projecta in a wreath between erotes. However, the other items of the Treasure have no inscriptions. Their imagery, like that of the casket, is apparently pagan or secular. Let us imagine (as seems not unlikely) that they were all part of one collection of silverware. Are they to be considered Christian or pagan? Obviously Secundus and Projecta considered themselves sufficiently Christian to have the fact inscribed on their gilded silver casket. So the casket at least, despite its iconography including a pagan goddess, is Christian. But what about, say, the patera (or flat dish) with Venus in a cockle shell (from the same treasure, but now in Paris)?⁴⁵ We may ask the same question about the flask with cupids and the casket with Muses.⁴⁶ It seems absurd to be pushing such questions, based on the form and iconography of the objects, when it is obvious that to Secundus and Projecta, as Christians, none of these items caused offence. The Christianity or paganness of a work of art lay not in its iconography but in how its viewers chose to see it. To Secundus and Projecta the classical theme of the patera may not have been in conflict with their Christianity; to a pagan visitor to their house (or the silversmith who fashioned it) it might have been 'pagan'; to a Christian bishop of fundamentalist tendencies it might have appeared wickedly idolatrous. Indeed to many viewers, whose number did not always include Christian bishops, a 'pagan' theme may simply have evoked the cultural associations of the classical tradition. For such viewers, classical motifs and deities (at least in secular contexts) alluded to the glorious past of Rome in literature, culture and imperial splendour.

⁴⁵ See, on this patera, Shelton (1981) 78.

⁴⁶ The Muse casket, *ibid.* 75-7; flask with cupids, *ibid.* 82-3.

The same questions arise with the splendid Sevso Treasure, probably also from the fourth century.⁴⁷ To what extent does the chi-rho monogram on one item of the set make the whole collection 'Christian'?⁴⁸ Are apparently pagan scenes such as the iconography of the hunt, of sacrifice, of Dionysus, in some ways appropriable to and not in conflict with a Christian reading? Likewise, does the appearance of a cross and a fish on spoons from the Thetford silver treasure (now in the British Museum and dated to between 350 and 400) allow a Christianizing interpretation for a collection which includes items with images of tritons, Venus, Cupid, Mars, Faunus and other deities?⁴⁹

In other words, if we stress the question 'How do we define Christian art?', can we deny a place in 'Christian art' to those items in any of these collections of silver without Christian inscriptions? But if we are to say that in some sense these treasures, taken to include all their items, are evidence for the kind of art acceptable to Christians in the fourth century, then we need to redefine what we mean by the term Christian art. Moreover, we need to ask in what respect, if any at all, such 'Christian' art was different from other art in late antiquity.

3. *Iconography and social function*

Before we leave the world of luxury silverware, let us add a further nuance to these questions by considering its function. The silver treasures appear to have been used on the dining-tables or in the boudoirs of wealthy people. They were objects which, despite some Christian elements, were not associated specifically with religion in any sense. They were neither liturgical vessels nor decorations for a liturgical setting, nor funerary objects or adornments. In this sense, they differed from ritually charged examples of Christian art – from the art of the sacred site, of cult enclosure, of private devotion. The primarily social and secular function of such objects may do much to explain the pagan imagery. Secundus and Projecta clearly had no worries about having Venus on their silverware, just as Theodosius II was happy to allow the Aphrodite of Cnidos into the Palace of Lausus. They might all, however, have had rather stronger objections had such explicitly pagan imagery appeared on the walls, ceiling or apse of a church.

In this way, the non-religious function of a great deal of late antique art helps to explain its use of pagan iconography. This is not only true of luxury silverware (to the syncretistic examples discussed above one might add such magnificent, purely pagan items as the Parabiago Plate with

⁴⁷ On the Sevso Treasure, see Mango and Bennett (1994); Painter (1990); Cahn *et al.* (1991).

⁴⁸ The item in question is Sevso's Hunting Plate, see Mango and Bennett (1994) 55–97.

⁴⁹ On the Thetford treasure, see Johns and Potter (1983) items 67 and 69; also Watts (1990) 146–58.

Cybele and Attis from Milan,⁵⁰ the Corbridge Lanx formerly in the collection of the Duke of Northumberland⁵¹ and the Mildenhall silver dish in the British Museum⁵² – although these last two, despite their pagan iconography, were found in caches including objects with Christian inscriptions). It also applies to the great quantity of textiles and tapestries surviving from Egypt with pagan themes,⁵³ as well as to late antique jewellery.⁵⁴ Perhaps the largest repertoire of purely pagan and secular images preserved on a single monument of the period is depicted in the mosaics from the villa at Piazza Armerina in Sicily, probably dating from the early to mid fourth century.⁵⁵ The floors of this lavish mansion, which covers some 1.5 hectares, have images of hunting, chariot-racing, sacrifice, fishing, harvesting, lovemaking, the famous dancing girls wearing the late antique version of a bikini and other idealizations of 'daily life'. Mythical elements include pictures of Heracles, Odysseus and Polyphemus, and Orpheus. There are also parodies of some of these themes, including a chariot race and a hunt by erotes. The secular nature of villas like Piazza Armerina means that their imagery cannot exclude the possibility of their having been used by Christian owners, viewers and visitors during their heyday. Like the Projecta casket and other items from the Esquiline Treasure, even a monument so entirely devoid of Christian imagery as the mosaics of Piazza Armerina might have satisfied not only the aesthetic demands of pagans but equally those of Christians, in a non-religious social context. To the mosaics of Piazza Armerina may be added the large numbers of secular mosaic floors excavated in Roman North Africa, whose many Venuses (for instance at Djemila, Setif and the Maison de la Cachette de Statues at Carthage) may have the same relation to Christianity as those from the Esquiline Treasure.⁵⁶ It should be added that purely pagan themes continued to decorate secular objects made for the aristocratic or imperial market well into the sixth century. Examples include the Meleager and Heracles plates from Constantinople (now in St Petersburg and Paris respectively)⁵⁷ and the floor mosaics from the peristyle of the imperial palace at Constantinople.⁵⁸

Even such religious buildings as mausolea or catacombs often mix explicitly Christian iconography with much more generalized imagery from the Graeco-Roman repertoire, and even with pagan themes. It should be

⁵⁰ On the Parabiago Plate, see Weitzmann (1979) 185–6, with bibliography, and Küllerich (1993) 174–7, with bibliography. ⁵¹ On the Corbridge Lanx, see Brendel (1941).

⁵² On the Mildenhall Plate, see Painter (1977) 26–8.

⁵³ On Coptic textiles with pagan themes, see Rutschowskaya (1990) 82–118.

⁵⁴ For a brief introduction to late antique jewellery, see Weitzmann (1979) 297–329.

⁵⁵ On Piazza Armerina, see Carandini, Ricci and De Vos (1982) and Wilson (1983).

⁵⁶ On African mosaics, see Dunbabin (1978). On these specific images, *ibid.* 251 (Carthage), 256 (Djemila), 268 (Setif).

⁵⁷ For the Meleager plate, see Weitzmann (1979) 163–4; for the Heracles plate *ibid.* 162–3.

⁵⁸ On the floor mosaics of the imperial palace, see Trilling (1989), with bibliography.

emphasized that funerary settings such as catacombs, tombs and sarcophagi, while they are both cultic and liturgical, may not have quite the same religious intensity as still more ritually charged locations or objects like temples, churches and icons. In the main cupola of the mid-fourth-century Mausoleum of S. Costanza in Rome (as we know from seventeenth-century drawings) there were mosaics with a good deal of Old and New Testament imagery. On the vault of the ambulatory there is a quantity of generalized Graeco-Roman imagery, vintaging cupids (which are both Christian and 'Dionysiac'), the four seasons and so forth.⁵⁹ The same pattern appears in the related imperial mausoleum (probably of Constans) at Centcelles near Tarragona.⁶⁰ Specifically religious themes are combined with frankly secular or un-Christian imagery. None of this is explicitly pagan in the way that the Venus on the Projecta casket is an explicitly pagan goddess. The combined evidence of S. Costanza and Centcelles suggests the possibility that the blend of pagan and Christian themes acceptable to Christians on secular objects to be used at home was not the same blend as that acceptable (at least to some kinds of Christian) in places of cult. But even in churches or on Christian sarcophagi, like that of Constantina originally placed in S. Costanza⁶¹ or the Three Good Shepherds sarcophagus from the Lateran collection (both now in the Vatican Museums),⁶² generalized themes which were pagan in origin (like putti, vine-harvesting and so forth) were entirely acceptable, even though these continued to carry pagan as well as Christian connotations throughout the fourth century.

To find explicitly pagan images combined with Christian themes in a cultic context, we need to look at the catacombs. The Via Latina catacomb in Rome, for example, discovered in 1955, dates from the mid to late fourth century.⁶³ It is unusual in being regular in shape and small by the standards of the great catacombs of Rome. Iconographically the picture is rather complex. Some rooms have exclusively Christian and Old Testament cycles. Two are exclusively 'pagan' in imagery – cubiculum N portraying a cycle of the myths of Heracles and cubiculum E an image interpreted as the death of Cleopatra or possibly Tellus, with a gorgon's head in the vault. Others still, namely cubiculum O and the octagonal room I, have syncretistic combinations of images. In the passage to cubiculum O are paintings of Ceres and Proserpina, while in Room I a unique scene of a doctor or philosopher explaining a human body to his

⁵⁹ The building's two apses are probably later (c. A.D. 400) dating from the Mausoleum's conversion to a church. They contain (unfortunately much restored, indeed remade) dogmatic images, in which Christ appears to give the Law to Peter and Paul and his keys to Peter. See Stern (1958), for general discussion and Hellemo (1989) 65–71 on the apses, with bibliography.

⁶⁰ On Centcelles, see Schlunk (1988).

⁶¹ On the sarcophagus of Constantina, see Kleiner (1992) 457–8, with bibliography 464.

⁶² On the Three Good Shepherds sarcophagus, see Bovini and Brandenburg (1967) 26–7.

⁶³ For English discussion see Tronzo (1986) and Ferrua (1990).

students is counterposed symmetrically against an image of Jesus giving the Law to Peter and Paul.

André Grabar writes:

Curiously enough, among the dead interred in this hypogaeum, while the majority were Christians, there were also pagans. With exemplary tolerance they were all buried together, although – judging by the paintings – in different cubicles. Christian and pagan paintings seem to be contemporary; so it is not a case of a pagan family subsequently converting to Christianity.⁶⁴

The conclusion that a mixture of Christian and pagan iconography should be explained by a mixture of actual Christians and actual pagans doing the commissioning, was also reached in the original publication of the catacomb in 1960 and has been underwritten as recently as 1986.⁶⁵ But how do scholars know that the people buried here were a mix of pagans and Christians? Only from the iconographical clue that pagan and Christian themes are painted in the catacomb. The unquestioned assumption is that a pagan image must point to a pagan belief and hence to a 'real' pagan who caused it to be put there and was buried beneath it. Likewise with Christian iconography and 'real' Christians. But is this kind of interpretation, with its rigid insistence on a simple correspondence of iconography and doctrine, convincing in the light of the Esquiline Treasure? Why should we assume that iconography points literally to what it appears to represent? Above all, the reductivist assumptions underlying these modern interpretations ignore the wealth of allegorical and exegetic methods of interpretation – not only Christian but also Jewish and pagan – which emerged in the early centuries after Christ.

4. *Creative viewing: typology, allegory and the art of reading images*

For the Jews, the Pentateuch was the Law; for the Christians it had become the Old Law, which prefigured, was fulfilled in and became redundant because of the New Law (the Law handed by Christ to Peter and Paul, as depicted in so many early Christian representations).⁶⁶ This change in relationship to the text of the Bible created a change in the nature of interpretation, and typological exegesis was born. Christian typology essentially involved seeing ancient stories and themes as enigmatic prefigurings of the incarnate truth as revealed in the Gospels. Subjects no longer had a single literal meaning, but might refer allegorically or symbolically to other truths.⁶⁷ In the case, for instance, of the beautiful Carrand diptych, the

⁶⁴ Grabar (1966) 225. ⁶⁵ Ferrua (1960) 94 and Engemann (1986) 92.

⁶⁶ On the *traditio* of the Law to Peter and Paul, see Hellemo (1989) 65–89 and (for some of its ironies) Sullivan (1994).

⁶⁷ On typology and Christian art, see Grabar (1969) 109–48 and Malbon (1990) 42–4, 129–36.

apostolic mission of St Paul is set beside the image of Adam in Paradise before the Fall. The activities of Christian sainthood become visually and typologically related to Paradise, and hence figure the possibility of redemption from sin to a state of prelapsarian innocence.⁶⁸

The Christian allegorical heritage in art owed much to the rich traditions of philosophic and Jewish allegory which were common in the Roman world. The former is perhaps most remarkably exemplified by the *Tabula* of Cebes, an allegorical exegesis of a picture by a pagan philosopher-sage which is presented as a religious initiation and probably dates from the first century A.D. The picture itself does not survive, but its interpretation as transmitted by this text shows the range and sophistication of pagan visual exegesis.⁶⁹ The influence of Cebes' text in pagan tradition is marked by several references and even imitations in the writings of Lucian (e.g. *Rhetorum Praeceptor* VI and *De Mercede Conductis* XLII). Jewish allegory, which provided commentary on texts rather than images, reached its apogee in the writings of Philo of Alexandria (a contemporary of St Paul). Philo's texts were to prove particularly influential on the Alexandrine Christian tradition as exemplified by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and on such fourth-century Platonizing Fathers as Gregory of Nyssa. In the fourth century itself paganism, in the person of the Neoplatonic master Iamblichus of Chalcis, created its own powerful model of allegorical exegesis tied to ritual acts in theurgy, the religious system espoused by Julian. Iamblichus specifically recommended that images be used as ritual symbols in theurgy (*De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum* VII.1–3). Neoplatonic patterns of interpretation were also to prove influential on later Christianity.⁷⁰ Intellectually the fourth century was immensely creative and innovative in producing new methods of interpretation and novel patterns of initiation; it was supremely an age of exegesis, particularly of literature and theology. Such exegesis does not deserve to be dismissed as 'a sequence of misplaced discoveries'.⁷¹ On the contrary, it marks a radically new relationship between the present and the past which is of the utmost importance for understanding the conceptual framework within which Christians throughout the Middle Ages interpreted not only their art but everything else in their world.

This exegetic frame of interpretation was not limited only to Old Testament themes. It came to be applied more broadly to many pagan myths and to authors like Homer or Virgil. Hence we find in both art and literature representations of the Christian Orpheus, the Christian Sol, the

⁶⁸ On the Carrand diptych, see Shelton (1989), with bibliography at p. 126 n. 3.

⁶⁹ On the *Tabula* of Cebes, see Fitzgerald and White (1983) and Elsner (1991) 39–46.

⁷⁰ On allegory in paganism, see Lamberton (1986) and Dawson (1992) 23–72; on the development of Christian allegory and figural discourse, see *ibid.* 127–240 and Cameron, Averil, *Rhetoric of Empire* 47–88.

⁷¹ Lane Fox (1986) 649–52.

Christian Bellerophon, and the assimilation in Christian iconography of pagan themes such as Hermes Criophorus and Endymion sleeping to Christian subjects like Christ the Good Shepherd and the sleep of Jonah under the gourd.⁷² Remarkable examples of such Christianizing interpretations of ancient poems through exegesis include Constantine's fourth-century interpretation of Virgil's Fourth Eclogue as a Christian prophecy,⁷³ and a remarkable range of allegories of the Homeric theme of Odysseus and the sirens.⁷⁴

It is striking that images of Odysseus and the sirens (assuredly pagan images from pagan contexts) offered the possibility of being interpreted in profoundly Christian ways by Christians who may have seen them. For Basil (*Ad Adulescentes* iv) and Fulgentius (*Fabulae secundum Philosophiam moraliter expositae* II.8), Odysseus was the type of wisdom striving for virtue. For Clement of Alexandria (*Protrepticus* XII) and Jerome (*Capitulationes Libri Josue, praeef.*), he is the paradigm of one who passed by the siren-song of death. For Hippolytus of Rome (*Elenchus* VII.13.1-3) the waxed ears of Odysseus' companions are the appropriate response to the 'doctrines of heretics'. Both Clement and Hippolytus create a complex allegory in which the ship of Odysseus is piloted by the Logos, with its mast being the cross itself. Such readings are not the only Christian response to this pagan theme, but they are a possible response, and one exemplified in a number of texts from east and west. They represent the exegetic relationship of Christianity with its past and suggest a range of possible meanings that could be discovered in other pagan themes by a sympathetic Christian.

It should perhaps be added that such allegorical and speculative interpretations seem to have been a popular feature of the more syncretistic areas of late antique religion. There are hints in the Mishnah and in some second-century writers, such as Melito of Sardis and Tertullian, of a Jewish interpretation of Serapis as Joseph.⁷⁵ In paganism there were numerous deities with whom Serapis was conflated and identified, including Pluto, Osiris, Dionysus, Apis, Asclepius and Zeus.⁷⁶ The non-Christian cults of late antiquity provide us with evidence of soteriological exegesis (for example, in the cult of Cybele and Attis),⁷⁷ of the exegesis by one cult of another cult's system (for example, a Neoplatonic Mithras),⁷⁸ and of frequent inter-cult syncretism, at least on the artistic level. The Walbrook Mithraeum in London (dating from the mid third to the mid fourth

⁷² On this imagery, see Huskinson (1974).

⁷³ On the Fourth Eclogue, see e.g. Lane Fox (1986) 649-51.

⁷⁴ On Odysseus and the Sirens, see Rahner (1963) 328-86.

⁷⁵ On Serapis as Joseph, see Mussies (1979). ⁷⁶ On Serapis syncretized, see Stambaugh (1972) 3.

⁷⁷ On soteriology in the cult of Cybele and Attis, see Gasparro (1985) 60-1.

⁷⁸ On the Platonic Mithras, see Turcan (1975).

centuries), for instance, yielded sculptures of Mithras, Mercury, Minerva and Serapis.⁷⁹

Let us return to the Heracles cycle in the Via Latina catacomb. In cubiculum N, the lunettes of the two arcosolia show scenes from the Alcestis myth. On the left Alcestis stands at the deathbed of her husband Admetus; on the right she returns to Admetus after having been liberated from death by Heracles, who is holding both his club and Cerberus, the conquered hound of Hell. This theme can be paralleled from other necropolis paintings in antiquity. It is not difficult to recognize its resonance in a funerary location, or its allegorical possibilities, bearing in mind the numerous Christian typological images (such as Daniel in the Lions' Den) in the Via Latina catacomb. By contrast with scholarly assumptions, these images do not imply that pagans occupied this room. Rather, they cry out for exegetic and typological interpretations which could make them no less Christian than the Venus on the Projecta casket. The fact that we possess no texts to support such a Christian exegesis of Heracles is not important. The extent of creative typological reading in the period was an invitation to fourth-century viewers to make such an interpretation. Once such exegesis exists, it is up to different viewers to apply its interpretative possibilities with as much originality as they wish. The room itself, within the Via Latina Catacomb, is evidence that images were creating the possibility for such a Christianizing allegory of Heracles to take place.

On the side walls of the chamber are four further scenes, this time of Heracles' labours. We see his conquests over Antaios and the Hydra, as well as the theft of the golden apples of the Hesperides and a meeting with the goddess Athena. Again, the labours of Heracles can be paralleled in funerary art – for instance, on sarcophagi. Moreover, on the analogy of Odysseus and the sirens or the Christian Bellerophon, one can see how such conquests of the monstrous can be read allegorically in a Christian way.⁸⁰ Likewise, the theft of the precious apples and the meeting with one's god can be entirely comprehensible *allegorically* to a Christian viewer. The placing of these images in this context allows for this Christian reading among other possibilities. In effect, the traditions of allegory and typology in viewing images of Old and New Testament themes had an inevitable seepage into similar syncretistic ways of viewing images from sources other than the Christian and Jewish scriptures.

Certainly, typology is a crucial key to understanding the conceptual frame of the fourth century. As one scholar has described it, 'typology perceives patterns; it integrates potentially divergent traditions'.⁸¹ The most

⁷⁹ On the Walbrook Mithraeum, see Toynbee (1986).

⁸⁰ For a number of pagan heroes in specifically Christian contexts, see Huskinson (1974): examples listed in the appendix, 85–90. ⁸¹ Malbon (1990) 149.

impressive Christian iconographic programmes of late antiquity are those whose multiple images are knit together in an interpretative typological framework. Such programmes include the very grand, such as the mid-fifth-century mosaic cycle (now sadly incomplete) of the nave and triumphal arch of the church of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome⁸² or the fifth-century doors of S. Sabina,⁸³ both of which combine Old Testament, New Testament and apocryphal themes; also they include such relatively humble objects as the late-fourth-century ivory *lipsanoteca* now in Brescia⁸⁴ or the small but impressive silver-gilt reliquary found under the high altar of San Nazaro Maggiore in Milan and probably made in the episcopate of Ambrose.⁸⁵ Particularly important for their typological programmes are the great Christian sarcophagi of the fourth century, such as the Adelfia sarcophagus in Syracuse (probably made in Rome), the great sarcophagus from Sant' Ambrogio in Milan⁸⁶ and that of the Two Brothers in the Vatican.⁸⁷ A prime case is the magnificent marble columnar sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (the city prefect and son of the consul) who died newly baptized in A.D. 359.⁸⁸ The iconography of this remarkable monument involves a complex typology of Christological, Old Testament and martyrological scenes. In the spandrels of the arches on the lower columns of the sarcophagus are six Old and New Testament themes in which all the figures are represented symbolically as lambs. The high level of biblical knowledge and interpretative ability which such objects demanded of their viewers demonstrates the great complexity and sophistication of meaning which Christian art so quickly developed in the decades after the death of Constantine.

5. Images and power: art, state and church in early Christendom

The toleration of Christianity proclaimed in 313 led to a remarkable transformation in Christian liturgy and its artistic and architectural settings. From house-churches like the third-century baptistery of Dura Europos, Christian ritual moved into huge basilicas in the major cities.⁸⁹ From using adapted domestic buildings, Christians found themselves worshipping in new purpose-built churches. From informal journeys by individuals like Melito of Sardis in the second century A.D. to the Holy Land, pilgrimage after the time of Constantine became an institution attracting large

⁸² On the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore, see Spain (1979) and Miles (1993).

⁸³ On the doors of S. Sabina, see Jeremias (1980).

⁸⁴ On the Brescia casket, see Watson (1981), with bibliography.

⁸⁵ On the San Nazaro reliquary, see Küllerich (1993) 181-2, with bibliography.

⁸⁶ On the Milan city gate sarcophagus, see Sansoni (1969) 3-12.

⁸⁷ On the Two Brothers Sarcophagus, see Bovini and Brandenburg (1967) 43-5.

⁸⁸ On the Junius Bassus sarcophagus, see Malbon (1990).

⁸⁹ On the beginnings of this process, see White (1990).

numbers of the pious.⁹⁰ Several first-hand accounts by fourth-century visitors to Palestine like the Bordeaux Pilgrim of A.D. 333 and Egeria, a woman from the western Mediterranean who visited the Holy Land in the 380s, attest to the many pilgrims who thronged the holy places, the existence of facilities to look after them and the interest back at home in their reports.⁹¹ And not only Palestine. Martyria (shrines celebrating the graves and relics of local martyrs) sprang up all over the empire in the fourth and fifth centuries, and these local cults became centres of pilgrimage in their own right.⁹² All this religious activity required impressive settings – churches, images and liturgical vessels. Furthermore, visitors to the new multitude of shrines throughout the Roman world demanded souvenirs and relics. By the sixth century, this demand had led to the mass production of amulets, reliquaries, *ampullae* and all manner of small-scale portable paraphernalia, including icons. Comparatively little of this sort has survived from the fourth century, but it is clear that even at that date much must have been produced. The Brescia *lipsanoteca*, a beautiful ivory box whose Christological themes are represented in large scale between smaller borders decorated with Old Testament subjects, is the most impressive reliquary remaining from the period.

The art of church building, of liturgy, of pilgrimage to the tombs of those who died for the faith differs fundamentally from the more secular and syncretistic kinds discussed above. For it is defined by its exclusively Christian and even sacramental nature. A martyrrium, for instance, celebrates someone put to death by pagans; it would be unlikely to use pagan iconography for doing this, in the manner of the Projecta casket or the Via Latina catacomb – although it might still make use of classical decorative motifs.

Very little decoration survives today from the many churches built in the fourth century. It has been argued that Constantine was careful to exclude pictorial representations from the great basilicas he constructed in Rome, Constantinople and Jerusalem.⁹³ Indeed, many in the hierarchy of the early church were hesitant about the use of art or even opposed to images.⁹⁴ St Augustine in the west and St Epiphanius of Salamis in the eastern church agreed that images 'lie' (Epiphanius' word in his *Letter to the Emperor Theodosius*), since they are not what they represent. As Augustine put it (*Soliloquies* II.10.18): 'A man in a painting cannot be true, even though he tends towards the appearance of a man.' Others in the fourth century, however, such as Nilus of Sinai (in his *Letter to Prefect Olympiodorus*), argued

⁹⁰ On early Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land, see Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, Walker (1990) and Taylor (1993).

⁹¹ On such early Christian pilgrims, see Wilkinson (1971) (with translations of Egeria and the Bordeaux Pilgrim). ⁹² Grabar (1946) is the classic study, with Ward-Perkins (1966).

⁹³ Grigg (1977).

⁹⁴ See Kitzinger (1954) and C. Murray (1981).

that images were useful as a way of teaching the illiterate. This was the view which became canonical, at least in the west, after the pronouncements of Gregory the Great on the matter in the sixth century.⁹⁵ Certainly as Christianization grew more dominant towards the end of the fourth century, the use of figurative images increased, partly as an aspect of church policy and partly in response to the demands of the laity.

Whatever the theoretical debate about the value of images among theologians, Christian art, including figurative and devotional images, became increasingly popular as an integral part of ecclesiastical, imperial and aristocratic patronage. Already in the mid fourth century there is written evidence that Christian portraits and the kinds of devotional images which were the precursors of icons were being produced. Eusebius refers to paintings of Christ and the apostles (*HE* VII.18.4) and, in his letter to Constantine's sister Constantia is genuine, expressed spirited opposition on theological grounds to her request for a portrait of Christ. The later years of the fourth century in Rome see the dedication of impressive figurative mosaics in the churches. The most distinguished (though somewhat over-restored) survival is the great apse mosaic of S. Pudenziana, dating from the 390s, where Christ is shown enthroned in majesty between the twelve apostles in the heavenly Jerusalem.⁹⁶ A number of aristocratic patrons funded decorations for the earlier imperial churches of the city in the same period, mosaics for the façade of St Peter's and apse mosaics for S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura and S. Giovanni in Laterano.⁹⁷ Today, very little remains of these first great Christian figurative programmes which were designed as the visual setting for the prime liturgical spaces of the empire's greatest liturgical buildings. But some early mosaics do survive in fragments from elsewhere, such as the late-fourth-century apses of the imperial chapel of S. Aquilino in the church of S. Lorenzo in Milan.⁹⁸

The patterns of patronage vary somewhat through the empire. In Rome, imperial church building (at which we glanced above, pp. 738-9) was exceeded by papal and other local patronage. In the fourth and early fifth centuries the first churches of S. Maria in Trastevere, S. Lorenzo in Damaso and S. Maria Maggiore with its magnificent cycle of mosaics were constructed by the popes.⁹⁹ In the same period both wealthy clerics and aristocrats built S. Pudenziana, SS. Giovanni e Paolo, SS. Gervasio e Protasio (now S. Vitale) and S. Sabina.¹⁰⁰ Episcopal and ecclesiastic patronage of church building was strong not only in Rome but also in Italy as a whole,

⁹⁵ On Gregory's pronouncements, see Duggan (1989) and Chazelle (1990).

⁹⁶ On the mosaics of S. Pudenziana, see Hellemo (1989) 41-63 and Matthews (1993) 92-114.

⁹⁷ On these dedications, see Ward-Perkins, *Public Building* 239.

⁹⁸ On S. Lorenzo, see Hellemo (1989) 18-19, 29-30, 37-9, with bibliography.

⁹⁹ On papal dedications in Rome, see Ward-Perkins, *Public Building* 237.

¹⁰⁰ On these churches, see Ward-Perkins, *Public Building* 239-40.

where the influence of the church became a rival to that of the emperor as early as the dispute between Theodosius and Ambrose in the late fourth century. In Milan, for instance, the site of Ambrose's see, the state appears to have been responsible for S. Lorenzo, perhaps the loveliest of all fourth-century churches to survive into the modern age, with its imperial chapels (or mausolea), S. Ippolito and S. Aquilino, and S. Tecla, the city's original cathedral.¹⁰¹ Ambrose, the city's bishop, built S. Nazaro in 382, which contains the relics of the local saints Nazarius and Celsus, S. Simpliciano and the church now known as S. Ambrogio, in which he deposited the miraculously discovered relics of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius.¹⁰²

The miraculous discovery of saints' bodies and their subsequent inclusion in churches (or the building of churches specially for them) began to occur with some frequency in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. This appealed directly to the new passion for pilgrimage and for relics. It made the place of finding the body, and the place to which it was moved, important pilgrimage centres. Ambrose was particularly prolific when it came to this kind of miraculous exhumation; he found the martyrs Vitalis and Agricola in Bologna in 393, some seven years after his discoveries in Milan.¹⁰³ His contemporary, pope Damasus, had found 'many saints' bodies' (*Liber Pont.* 1.212) in Rome; and numerous other saints would be discovered, from Toulouse to the Holy Land, in the years between 380 and 415. Such finds gave local churches a certain control over religious charisma and allowed them influence in the building and financing of basilicas.

Nevertheless, in the east the emperors were still the most opulent patrons. In Constantinople they completed Constantine's foundations of Hagia Sophia, Hagia Irene and the Church of the Holy Apostles, which was the imperial mausoleum. A number of other imperial foundations followed, including Chalkoprateia and Blachernae. Hagia Sophia, which had been dedicated in 360, had to be rebuilt and reconsecrated in 415 after fire damage in the riots of 404. Nevertheless, the mid-fifth-century *Notitia Urbis* (an enumerative list of landmarks) indicates only fourteen churches in Constantinople a century after its foundation.¹⁰⁴

It was in the Holy Land, above all, that the cult of the saints, the demands of pilgrimage and the lavishness of imperial finance combined to produce an extraordinary spate of church building. As Eusebius reports in his *Vita Constantini*, Constantine built the Martyrium or Golgotha basilica on the site of the Holy Sepulchre (Christ's tomb and the place of the Resurrection), the Nativity basilica in Bethlehem, the Eleona church on the Mount of Olives at what was believed to be the site of the Ascension, and the basilica at Mamre near Hebron where Abraham had entertained his

¹⁰¹ On Milan, see Krautheimer, *Architecture* 55–60 and (1983) 68–92.

¹⁰² On these discoveries, see McLynn (1994) 211–17, 220–35. ¹⁰³ See *ibid.* 343–50.

¹⁰⁴ On fourth- and fifth-century Constantinople, see Mango (1985) 23–50.

three angelic visitors.¹⁰⁵ To these buildings, extra appendages were rapidly added in succeeding years, such as the Anastasis rotunda at the Holy Sepulchre. In Jerusalem the fourth century saw imperial subsidies for church building in the form of tax exemption by Theodosius, and many more churches were erected, such as the Sion basilica, the Lazarium and the Imbomon.¹⁰⁶ In the first half of the fifth century, Eudoxia, wife of Theodosius II, emulated her royal predecessor Helena in visiting the Holy Land, where she subsequently settled. Her patronage included funds for the martyrion of St Stephen, the monastery of Bassa and other churches.¹⁰⁷

Ecclesiastical and imperial patronage showed the state, in the form of the governing hierarchy, appropriating Christianity to itself by controlling funding and consequently visual settings. Art and architecture, in the hands of the empire's aristocratic hierarchy both temporal and spiritual, became a means of romanizing Christianity by making it a religion that fitted the social and political needs of the empire. Christian art began to borrow forms for its principal images from the representation of imperial ceremonial.¹⁰⁸ For instance, in the central scenes of the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Christ appears in the role of universal emperor seated over a figure of the sky and enters Jerusalem in the form of the imperial *adventus* (compare the Kerch silver dish, now in St Petersburg, showing the *adventus* of Constantius II).¹⁰⁹

Likewise, imperial art grew iconic, appropriating to itself the abstraction and symbolism of the sacred image as created by the religious cults. In the great silver Missorium (or dish) of Theodosius I, dating to 388 and now in Madrid, the haloed emperor, larger than his symmetrically arranged colleagues, sits gazing full-frontally at the viewer above a representation of the earth. A schematic and hieratic relationship of viewer and viewed is implied, with the emperor far removed from the human level (the viewer's level) to which his icon is addressed.¹¹⁰ One of the earliest consular diptychs to survive, that of Probus dated to A.D. 406 and now in Aosta cathedral, has the emperor Honorius represented twice in military dress and halo, with a Christian banner prominently displayed.¹¹¹ He too is isolated in a niche, with the abstracted gaze of late antique charisma, like the consular portraits of Constantius II and his Caesar Gallus from the celebrated

¹⁰⁵ On Constantine's churches, see Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage* 6-27 and Wilkinson (1971) 36-54.

¹⁰⁶ On later-fourth-century church building in Jerusalem, see Wilkinson (1971) 47-54.

¹⁰⁷ On Eudoxia in Palestine, see Holum, *Theodosian Empresses* 217-28.

¹⁰⁸ This view, which has been dubbed 'the Emperor Mystique', has now been systematically attacked by Mathews (1993). I think Mathews rather overstates his case.

¹⁰⁹ On the Junius Bassus images of Christ, see Malbon (1990) 49-54 (Mathews does not discuss this sarcophagus); on the Kerch dish, see Delbrueck (1933) 144-51.

¹¹⁰ On the Missorium of Theodosius (1993) 19-26, with bibliography 19, n. 40.

¹¹¹ On the Probus diptych, see Küllerich (1993) 65-7, with bibliography 65, n. 217.

codex-calendar of A.D. 354, which survives in Renaissance copies and of which the forms prefigure the evangelists' portraits in so many later manuscripts.¹¹² Such images recall the remarkable verbal portrait of Constantius II which Ammianus draws at XVI.10.10:

As if his neck were in a vice, he kept the gaze of his eyes straight ahead, and turned his face neither right nor left . . . as if he were the image of a man.

(Trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb edn)

Likewise one is reminded of Gregory of Nyssa's portrait (written in the late fourth century) of Gregory Thaumaturgus, bishop of Neocaesarea, who astonished observers by entering his home town without his expression or his glance straying. Whether sacred or secular, these accounts and images portray a new kind of charisma fashioned through the intermingling of Christianity with late Roman culture.

Such images and descriptions portray a stratified world in which the charisma of the portrayed, be he saint, emperor or consul, is of a different order from that of both his colleagues and his viewers. Something of this distinction is illustrated in other early consular diptychs, which are themselves secular icons designed to laud the temporal authority of the figure whom they celebrate. The Lampadii ivory leaf, dated to about 415 and now in Brescia, depicts the great man (presumably Lampadius as consul) larger than his two companions and framed in a niche.¹¹³ He appears in the top half of the panel, as a state icon, gazing out and down on to the circus races for which, the image implies, he has paid. The movement and profiles of the lower half of the image contrast markedly with the static enthronement above. In similar vein, the Probianus diptych in Berlin (about A.D. 400) depicts in the upper tier the *vicarius* of Rome seated grandly in an exquisite perspectival niche with two attendants in smaller scale than him.¹¹⁴ Beneath, two small figures in togas acclaim him. Again, the space is divided into two parts, with the iconic image of authority at the top and the more dynamic image of the populace below.

The ivory diptychs show the Roman state as it wished itself to be seen. They are the visual equivalent of the political theory of Eusebius (in the *Laus Constantini*) in which the secular order imitates the divine order: as God rules the spiritual realm, so the emperor rules the temporal realm. Here, in an abstract iconic language equally suited to the depiction of Christ the universal emperor and Caesar the temporal emperor, art has achieved a fusion of secular and spiritual paradigms, which late antique rulers sought in order to bolster their prestige. In the case of these consular diptychs, the authority of Christ and the emperor is represented by the

¹¹² On the codex-calendar of A.D. 354, see Salzman, *Roman Time*.

¹¹³ On the Lampadii leaf, see Küllerich (1993) 143–4, with bibliography.

¹¹⁴ On the Probianus diptych, see Küllerich (1993) 141–3, with bibliography.

consul whose power is held in both their names. Such images not only depict ceremonial – they are a part of it, used in public display and in private rituals of exchange. In such ceremonies, and in its public appearance on the great buildings of the state, the distinctive art and architecture of late antiquity played its own active and influential part in the transformation of Roman culture.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ My thanks are due to Margaret Atkins, Averil Cameron, Robin Cormack and Janet Huskinson for their comments. This chapter was written in 1991 and revised (largely bibliographically) in spring 1994. In the footnotes I refer readers where possible to English-language discussions of monuments, only suggesting foreign publications *in extremis* where no (recent) English discussion exists. In the bibliography, I have cited some fundamental non-English works.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

A.D.	Emperors	The West
337	Death of Constantine (22 May). Constans, Constantine II and Constantius proclaimed emperors (9 September)	
340	Constantine II killed (spring)	
350	Magnentius proclaimed emperor in Gaul. Constans killed (shortly after 18 January)	
351	Gallus, brother of Julian, appointed Caesar; executed 354	
353	Magnentius commits suicide	355 Usurpation of Silvanus in Gaul; Silvanus assassinated; Cologne sacked by Franks
		355-9 Julian campaigns in Gaul; besieged at Sens by Alamanni; battle of Strasbourg (357); treaty of federation with Franks (357/8); restoration of Roman fortresses along the Rhine
360	Julian (Caesar 355) proclaimed emperor at Paris	
361	Constantius II died (3 November)	
363	Death of Julian in Mesopotamia while on campaign in the east (26 June). Jovian proclaimed	
364	Jovian dies near Ancyra (17 February). Valentinian I proclaimed (26 February); nominates his brother Valens as co-emperor in the east	
365	Revolt of Procopius in the east	
367	Valentinian's son Gratian proclaimed co-emperor, aged eight	367, 369 Valens leads armies across the Danube
		370-1 Treason trials at Rome; revolt of Firmus in N. Africa
375	Valentinian I dies after a stroke (17 November). Valentinian II, aged four, proclaimed emperor with Gratian	375 Valentinian I campaigns on lower Rhine and against the Quadi; Milan becomes seat of western court
		376 Tervingi allowed to cross the Danube

The East

337-50 Early wars of Constantius II against Persia

343-4 Battle of Singara

345 Constantius in Nisibis

346 Second siege of Nisibis

350 Third siege of Nisibis

350-60 Later Persian wars of Constantius II

359 Siege and fall of Amida

363 Julian at Antioch

363 Julian's Persian expedition

364 Jovian's treaty with Persia

365/6 Constantinople seized by Procopius

Cultural and Religious

340 Athanasius exiled

343 Council of Sardica

346 Athanasius restored

350 Death of Pachomius

356 Athanasius exiled again

356 Death of Antony

370-9 Basil bishop of Caesarea

371-2 Trials at Antioch

c. 371-97 Martin bishop of Tours

373 Death of Athanasius

374-97 Ambrose bishop of Milan

A.D.	Emperors	The West
378	Valens marches west from Antioch against Goths, reaches Constantinople (30 May), killed in battle of Adrianople (9 August)	
379	Theodosius, son of the elder Theodosius, Valentinian's <i>magister equitum</i> (executed 375), proclaimed emperor at Sirmium (19 January)	
		382 Peace treaty with Goths
383	Magnus Maximus proclaimed emperor in Britain and invades Gaul; Gratian deserted by his troops and killed (25 August). Magnus Maximus recognized as emperor by Theodosius. Invades Italy 387; Valentinian II and his mother Justina flee to Thessalonica. Arcadius, son of Theodosius, proclaimed emperor in east (19 January)	•
388	Magnus Maximus defeated by Theodosius and killed	
392	Valentinian II commits suicide having failed to dismiss Arbogast; Eugenius proclaimed emperor	
393	Honorius, son of Theodosius, proclaimed emperor	
394	Eugenius and Arbogast defeated by Theodosius' army at river Frigidus	
395	Theodosius I dies at Milan. His sons Honorius and Arcadius rule as emperors in west and east respectively	395 The ascendancy of Stilicho
		397-8 Revolt of Gildo in Africa

The East

Cultural and Religious

- 379 Death of Shapur II of Persia
- 379 Death of Basil of Caesarea;
Gregory of Nazianzus, *Funeral
Oration on Basil*
- 381 Council of Constantinople
- 382 Altar of Victory removed from
senate in Rome
- 382 Jerome in Rome, forced to leave
- 383 Gratian drops title of *pontifex
maximus*
- 387 Riot of the Statues, Antioch
- 387–90 Libanius, *For the Temples*
- 390 Riot and massacre at Thessalonica
- 391 Destruction of Serapaeum of
Alexandria
- 391–2 Theodosius I's legislation against
paganism
- 393 Alaric and Goths threaten
Constantinople; Gainas and Eastern
armies return to Constantinople and
assassinate Rufinus
- 393–430 Augustine bishop of Hippo
- 396 Alaric and Goths ravage Greece
- 397–8 Synesius in Constantinople
- 397 Augustine's *Confessions*
- 398–404 John Chrysostom bishop of
Constantinople
- 399 Revolt of Tribigild and Greuthungi
in Phrygia; execution of Eutropius
- 399 Origenist monks go into exile from
Egypt
- 400 Gainas leaves Constantinople and
withdraws to Thrace; massacre of
Goths in city; Gainas defeated by
Fravitta, killed by Huns
- December/January 400/401

A.D.	Emperors	The West
407-13	Series of would-be usurpers in the west, successfully suppressed.	406 Vandals, Alans, Sueves cross Rhine.
408	Arcadius dies and is succeeded by his son Theodosius II, aged seven	408 Alaric and Visigoths enter Italy; fall and death of Stilicho 410 Sack of Rome by Alaric 410 Revolt of Britain; Honorius writes to cities of Britain
421	Constantius, <i>magister utriusque militiae</i> in the west since 411, and married to Galla Placidia in 417, declared emperor by Honorius (8 February); not recognized in the east. He dies of an illness after six months (2 September)	414 Marriage of Athaulf and Galla Placidia at Narbonne 418 Goths settled in southern Gaul
423	Death of Honorius	
425	Honorius' nephew Valentinian becomes emperor as Valentinian III, after a brief period during which John, the <i>primicerius notariorum</i> , had been proclaimed	429 Vandals cross to Africa 439 Vandals take Carthage
450	Theodosius II reigns in the east until his death in 450, when he is succeeded by the elderly senator Marcian, his rule reinforced by his marriage to Theodosius' sister the Augusta Pulcheria	

The East

Cultural and Religious

402 Temples in Gaza destroyed with
imperial sanction

411 Council of Carthage condemns
Donatists

412 Cyril becomes bishop of Alexandria

413–25 Augustine writing the *City of God*

415 Hypatia killed by mob in Alexandria

418 Council of Carthage condemns
Pelagianism; Orosius' *History against
the Pagans*

c. 420 John Cassian's *Institutes*

423 S. Symeon the Elder ascends pillar

431 Council of Ephesus

438 Theodosian Code

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AASS Maii</i>	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i> (May), 71 vols. 1863–1940
<i>ABull</i>	<i>The Art Bulletin</i>
<i>AC</i>	<i>Acta Classica</i>
<i>ACO</i>	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i> , ed. E. Schwartz, Berlin
<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année Épigraphique</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJAHist</i>	<i>American Journal of Ancient History</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>Amb. Op.</i>	<i>Opera Omnia di Sant' Ambrogio</i> , Milan and Rome 1979–
<i>Anal. Boll.</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>Annales (ESC)</i>	<i>Annales (Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations)</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , ed. H. Temporini. Berlin 1972–
<i>Ant. Afr.</i>	<i>Antiquités Africaines</i>
<i>AP</i>	<i>L'Année Philologique</i>
<i>APF</i>	<i>Archiv für Papyrusrorschung und verwandte Gebiete</i>
<i>ARCA</i>	Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs, Liverpool
<i>Arch. Rev. from Cambr.</i>	<i>Archaeological Review from Cambridge</i>
<i>ASNP</i>	<i>Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>BAGB</i>	<i>Bulletin d'Association Guillaume Budé</i>
<i>BAR</i>	British Archaeological Reports
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
<i>BCTH</i>	<i>Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques</i>
<i>BEFAR</i>	Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et Rome
<i>BLE</i>	<i>Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BSNAF</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>Bull. Am. Soc. Pap.</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
<i>Byz. Forsch.</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>Byz. Zeit.</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>

CAH	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
CArch	<i>Cahiers Archéologiques</i>
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
CEFR	<i>Collection de l'École Française de Rome</i>
CbHist	<i>Church History</i>
Chron. Min.	<i>Chronica Minora</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CJ	<i>Codex Justinianus</i>
C&M	<i>Classica et Mediaevalia</i>
CPh	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
CS	<i>Critica Storica</i>
CSCO	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> , Vienna
C.Th.	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i>
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
Eccl. Occ. Mon.	<i>Ecclesiae occidentalis monumenta iuris antiquissima</i> , ed. C. Turner.
Iur. Ant.	Oxford, 1899–1939
EFR	École Française de Rome
EHBS	Ἐπετηρίς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν. Athens
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
Entr. Hardt.	Entretiens Hardt
Epigr. Anat.	<i>Epigraphica Anatolica</i>
FHG	<i>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum</i> , ed. C. Müller
FIRA	<i>Fontes Iuris Romani Anteiustiniani</i>
GCS	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</i> . Leipzig
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
GWU	<i>Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht</i>
Hist. Zeit.	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HTbR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICUR	<i>Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae</i> , ed. Deggrasi
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
IGLS	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i> , Paris
ILCV	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres</i> , ed. E. Diehl
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
IRT	<i>Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania</i> , ed. J. M. Reynolds and J. B. Ward-Perkins. Rome 1952
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JbAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>

<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JöB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JS</i>	<i>Journal des Savants</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JThS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>MAAR</i>	<i>Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome</i>
<i>MBAH</i>	<i>Münsterische Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte</i>
<i>MDAI(R)</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts (Röm. Abt.)</i>
<i>Med. Hist. Rev.</i>	<i>The Mediterranean Historical Review</i>
<i>MEFR</i>	<i>Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'École Française de Rome</i>
<i>MGH, Auct.</i>	
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Monumenta Historiae Germaniae, Auctores Antiquissimi</i>
<i>MH</i>	<i>Museum Helveticum</i>
<i>MIOEG</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung</i>
<i>Nott. Med. St.</i>	<i>Nottingham Medieval Studies</i>
<i>OCA</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
<i>OJA</i>	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>OLA</i>	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta</i>
<i>OLP</i>	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
<i>P.Abinn.</i>	<i>The Abinnaeus Archive</i> , ed. H. I. Bell and others. Oxford 1962
<i>P.Bodm.</i>	<i>Papyri Bodmer</i> , Fondation Martin Bodmer, Geneva
<i>P.Ital.</i>	<i>Die nichtliterarischen lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445–700</i> , ed. J. O. Tjäder. Lund 1955
<i>P.Lond.</i>	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i> , ed. F. G. Kenyon and H. I. Bell. London, 1893–1917
<i>P.Mich.</i>	<i>Papyri in the University of Michigan Collection</i> , Ann Arbor 1931–
<i>P.Oxy.</i>	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , ed. B. P. Grenfell and others. London, 1898–
<i>PBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
<i>PBSR</i>	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
<i>PCPS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne
<i>PLRE 1</i>	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire 1</i> , ed. Jones, Martindale and Morris, 1971
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Parola del Passato</i>
<i>PSI</i>	<i>Papyri Greci e Latini, Pubblicazioni della Società italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci e latini in Egitto</i> . 1912–
<i>QUCC</i>	<i>Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> . Stuttgart
<i>RD</i>	<i>Revue Historique de Droit Français et Étranger</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Pauly-Wissowa, Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des Études Anciennes</i>

REB	<i>Revue des Études Byzantines</i>
RecPbL	<i>Recherches de Philologie et de Linguistique</i> , Louvain
RecSR	<i>Recherches de Science Religieuse</i>
REL	<i>Revue des Études Latines</i>
RFIC	<i>Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica</i>
RH	<i>Revue Historique</i>
RHE	<i>Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique</i>
RIC	<i>Roman Imperial Coinage</i>
RIDA	<i>Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité</i>
RIL	<i>Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo</i>
Riv. di Arch.	
Cristiana	<i>Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana</i>
Riv. di Filologia	<i>Rivista di Filologia</i>
RM	<i>Rheinisches Museum</i>
ROC	<i>Revue de l'Orient Chrétien</i>
Röm. Quart.	<i>Römische Quartalschrift</i>
RSA	<i>Rivista Storica dell'Antichità</i>
RSI	<i>Rivista Storica Italiana</i>
SBAW	Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philologisch-historische Klasse
SChrét.	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>
SCO	<i>Studi Classici ed Orientali</i>
SDHI	<i>Studia et Documenta Historiae et Iuris</i>
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
SHA	<i>Scriptores Historiae Augustae</i>
SPAW	Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin
Stud. Rom.	<i>Studi Romani</i>
Stud. Stor.	<i>Studi Storici</i>
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
Theol. Zeitschr.	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
Te&MByz	<i>Travaux et Mémoires. Centre de recherches d'histoire et de civilisation byzantines</i>
TU	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen</i>
Vig. Christ.	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
YCS	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZRG	<i>Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte (Röm. Abt.)</i>

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